the weekly
Standard

MARCH 4, 2002

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GEORGE W. BUSH, MOVIE STAR
MATT LABASH

Rebirth of a Nation

Valor and victimhood after September 11

BY TOD LINDBERG

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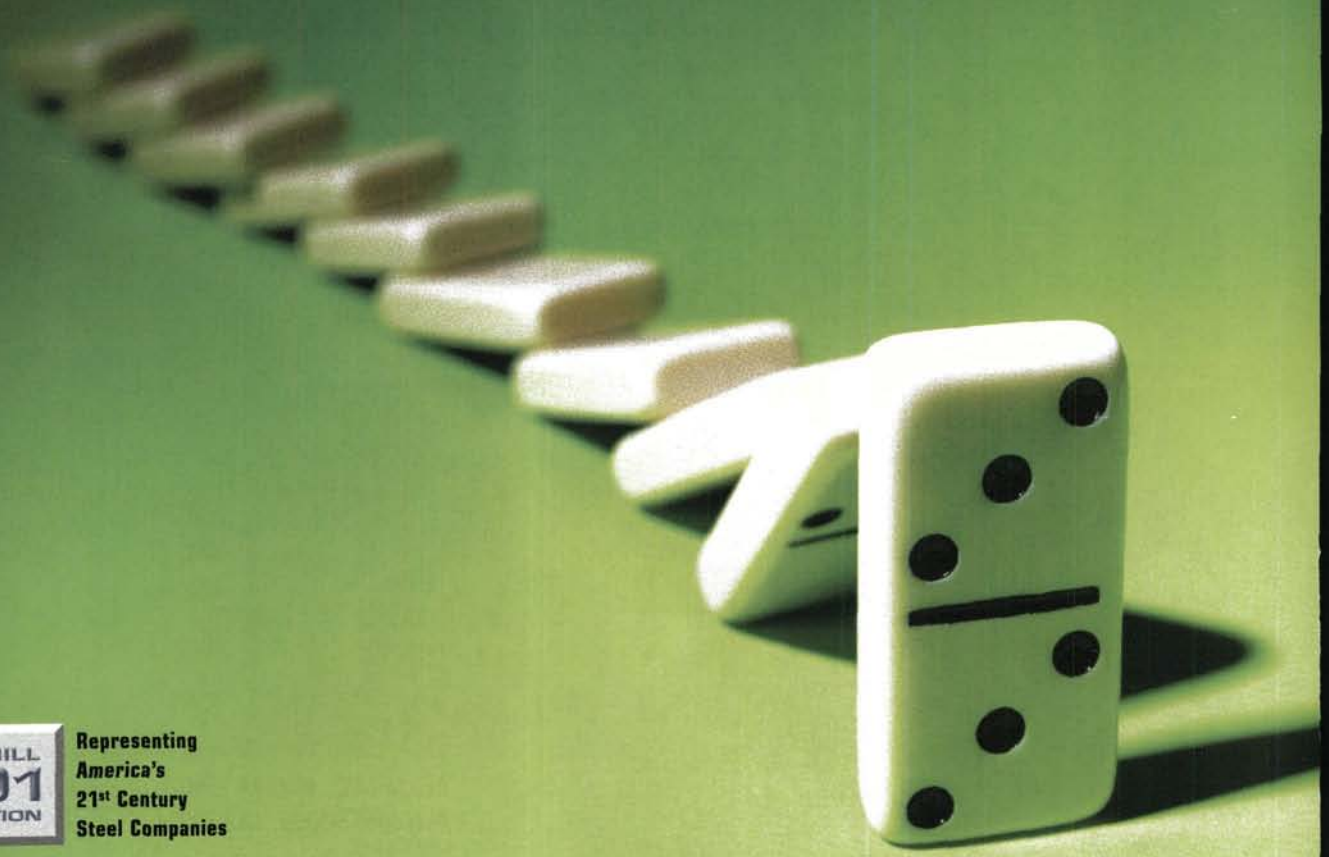

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[1] See Minimill 201 Coalition (Long Products) January 15, 2002, Submission to USTR, at 13-14.

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The DCCC's Dirty Tricks

When J.D. Hayworth took to the House floor last week in support of a campaign-finance amendment to ban non-citizens from making political contributions, he was characteristically blunt:

"Well, now my friends, here is your chance to change the system. To say, lawful citizens can contribute. No more financiers of Red Pagoda Communist Chinese cigarettes; no more daughters of the head of the Chinese equivalent of the CIA who showed up in the Oval Office; no more sham corporations, Chinese shell corporations operated by the Red Army of China, doing their dirty work through soft money to a Clinton-Gore reelection campaign. If you're serious about reform, stand up for national security, stand up for this perfecting amendment. But I know the Orwellian phrase will be, somehow this is a poison pill. Yes, I guess it is poisonous to disallow enemies of this state access to our political system."

And on he went—criticizing the Clinton administration and its illegal Chinese fund-raising. So imagine his surprise when the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee responded with a press release that began: "Yesterday, during a debate on the Floor of the United States House of Representatives, Arizona Republican J.D. Hayworth likened Hispanic legal permanent residents to 'Enemies of the State.'"

Huh? Hayworth never used the word "Hispanic" in his brief speech—we've quoted about one-third of it above. Nonetheless, the headline on the press release reads, "GOP Says Hispanics are 'Enemies of the State'—Democrats Fight Back."

At first we simply thought our good friends at the DCCC were a little confused. Then we came upon an audio file of Hayworth's speech on the DCCC website. Funny thing: Hayworth's main argument about the Chinese is gone, apparently deleted by a good editor. What remains is his "enemies of the state" reference.

Again, the ever-magnanimous SCRAPBOOK gave the DCCC the benefit of the doubt. Surely some pimple-faced intern was playing a prank? Nope. A closer look at the DCCC press release reveals these comments from Rep. Bob Menendez: "Rep. Hayworth's comment is the latest attack on the Hispanic community by the Republican leadership in Congress, who speak out of both sides of their mouth when it comes to increasing Hispanic participation in politics. What happened to a kinder and gentler Republican party? Fortunately, Republicans failed in their attempt to silence voices and exclude ethnic groups."

That Menendez would participate in such a smear was cowardly enough. What makes it even worse is that in 1998 he voted for the Illegal Foreign Contributions Act, which, Hayworth's office points out, "would have barred non-citizens from making campaign contributions or expenditures." Exactly what Hayworth was again proposing to do. *Ay, caramba*! ♦

The Thugs Who Killed Daniel Pearl

When human-rights activists want to describe a dictator whose barbarism goes wildly beyond even the usual level of torture, kidnapping, and murder, they call him a "thug." But with the murder of reporter Daniel Pearl in Karachi, we may have the first outbreak of literal thuggery in more than a century.

The original thugs were the scourge of British India (and what is now Pakistan). The word thug means "cheat" or "scoundrel" in Hindi and Urdu and comes out of the Sanskrit *sthaga*, "to deceive." Thugs traveled in bands and killed as a kind of a hobby. Their method was to win the confidence of a traveler, usually through hospitality. The elaborate ruses of Daniel Pearl's killers—luring him with the promise of meeting an associate of terrorist Richard Reid—would not have been outside the 19th-century thugs' repertoire. They compared their murders to hunting, and dishonesty—winning the trust of strangers through lies—was the sport of it for them.

According to the testimony of one thug, recorded in James Morris's *Heaven's Command*, "You, sahib, have but the instincts of the wild beasts to overcome, whereas the Thug has to subdue the suspicions and fears of intelligent men and women, often heavily armed and guarded. . . . Can you not imagine the pleasure of overcoming such protection during days of travel in their company, the joy of seeing suspicion change to friendship, until that wonderful [killing] moment arrives?"

In the early 19th century, Thugs were killing thousands of people a year. The Crown eradicated them in the 1830s by appointing the ruthless Captain William Sleeman an Imperial Superintendent for Suppression of Thuggery. Captured thugs were tried by special commissions, and either turned into informers, executed, or subjected to the tattooing of the word "Thug" on their eyelids. This unusually harsh treatment, said Sleeman, was "a deviation from the Regulations fully warranted by the crime of Thuggism, which justly places those who practised it beyond the pale of social

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justice." THE SCRAPBOOK does not think he was wrong. ♦

Choosing Colorblindness

According to the 2000 Census, California has 1.6 million multi-racial residents (and counting), a trend that threatens to make racial classifications in the state anachronistic. Hoping to hasten this process along, and finally put an end to the mischief of racial quotas, Ward Connerly is trying to qualify for the state's November ballot a Racial Privacy Initiative, which would prevent the state from collecting racial data and classifying people by race (with some common-sense exceptions for law enforcement, medical research, etc.).

The RPI already has the support of a broad range of Californians, including San Diego Padres owner John Moores, Connerly's colleague on the UC Board of Regents. Moores isn't exactly a raving right-winger—he's been a donor to Governor Gray Davis, former President Clinton, and other Democratic candidates. Moores seems to have a better grip on California's racial politics than the state's Republicans, who are running away from the RPI just as they did from Connerly's 1996 Prop. 209, which eliminated race and gender preferences in state hiring and college admissions. State GOP spokesman Rob Stutzman says the RPI "is not consistent with the priorities the party has in California." (Given the party's recent track record, you can insert your own joke here.)

The Stutzman quote comes from a December *Chicago Tribune* story on the RPI. Here's THE SCRAPBOOK's favorite passage from the story: "Some civil rights activists around the country say the new [post-Sept. 11] sense of unity and patriotism is posing a major challenge for them, relegating certain race issues [such as slavery reparations] to the back burner." We suspect if he gets his vote, Connerly, whose idea is that a sense of unity is the solution and not the problem, will carry the day. ♦

Call for Entries

A new journalism award—and THE SCRAPBOOK takes the view that there can never be too many of these—is being launched by two worthy institutions and one worthy benefactor. The Paul Mongerson Prize for Investigative Reporting on the Media will honor journalism that critically evaluates and corrects distortion in other news stories. Top prize is $10,000; entries of distinction will be awarded $1,000.

Mongerson, who put up the money for the awards, is an engineer, businessman, and sometime media critic. The award is administered by S. Robert Lichter's Center for Media and Public Affairs in Washington and Larry Sabato's University of Virginia Center for Governmental Studies. The competition is open to professional journalists working for a U.S.-based newspaper, magazine, radio, TV, or cable outlet. Deadline for entries is March 1, so quickness in filling out entry forms will also count. But there is no fee, and the forms can be downloaded from *www.cmpa.com*. ♦

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Casual

Situation Comedy

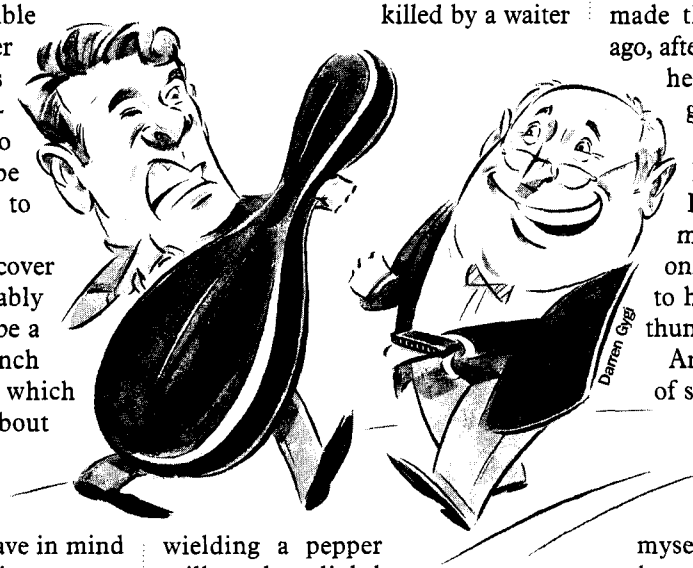
This morning, out for a walk in wintry weather, I discovered a young student from the Northwestern School of Music struggling on the icy sidewalk while carrying a double bass. "Excuse me," said I, as our paths crossed, "but have you ever considered taking up the harmonica?" He took it, as the Victorians say, in good part. My model here was Herbert Beerbohm Tree, the actor and older half-brother of Max Beerbohm, who once came upon a mover bent almost double because of the grandfather clock he was toting on his back. "My good sir," Beerbohm Tree is supposed to have said, "wouldn't it be much more convenient to own a wristwatch?"

A phrase is needed to cover this sort of thing, preferably one in English. It would be a companion to the French phrase *esprit d'escalier*, which refers to one's regret about coming up with witty remarks or rejoinders only when it is too late to deliver them. What I have in mind is the gratuitous remark, in response to nothing but the scene in which one finds oneself. I seem to have become something of a specialist at these remarks.

Later the same day, finding myself in a large yet crowded Chicago butcher shop called Paulina Market, my package under my arm, I said to an older couple as I was leaving, "I'm getting out of here. Too many vegetarians for my taste." I'm far from sure that they got the joke. And why should they? More likely one turned to the other, asking, "Who was that maniac?"

At the supermarket, the bagger, a tall, thin kid with dreadlocks, wants to know what kind of bag I want. Instead of answering either plastic or paper, I say: "Suede." A pause; a moment of tension. Then he smiles. "Ain't heard that one yet," he says, grinning. "Not too bad."

In the restaurant, salad dishes set before us, the waiter comes round with a particularly large pepper mill. "Pepper?" he asks each of the six of us in turn, twisting the pepper on four of our salads. When he gets to me, I say, "No thanks. I don't carry pepper-mill insurance. I had a cousin who was killed by a waiter wielding a pepper mill only slightly smaller than this one." A look of disbelief is followed by a small shock—ten watts, let us say—of recognition, as the waiter realizes he is dealing with a genial but authentic screw-off.



While my material is, I hope, original, I don't seem to mind reusing it. I've hauled out the pepper-mill bit no fewer than two or three hundred times. I don't seem to mind recycling, either. A number of years ago I bought two two-volume sets of the letters of Justice Holmes—*the Holmes-Laski Letters* and the *Holmes-Pollock Letters*. The bookseller, a rather dour New Englander named Richard Barnes, asked if I would like him to wrap them for me. "That's all right, Mr. Barnes," I said, "I'll read them here." I thought I noted the slightest hint of a wisp of a smile play at the left corner of his mouth, though I could have been mistaken. Two weeks ago, I bought two dozen night-crawler worms for my turtles at a fishing equipment and bait store. The man who brought them to me asked if I wanted them in a bag. "No thanks," I said, "I'll eat them here."

I wonder if the effect of these various bits isn't to put the people on whom I use them in an *esprit d'escalier* frame of mind? Did it only later occur to the boy with the double bass to say, "No, but would you mind terribly if I smashed it over your head?" The bagger might have asked if I'd like to try one of his plastic bags over my face. The waiter might have noted that I made the same joke seven months ago, after which, near as he can recall, he spat in my entrée, the linguine and seafood dish. The fellow at the bait store might have asked if, with my worms, I preferred regular or Poupon mustard. Mr. Barnes needed only to have kept a stiff lower lip to have brought me down with a thump.

Are these remarks merely a form of showing off: Yo, look at me—clever little mother hubbard, am I not? Yet my motive, I swear, isn't to put anyone down. I fancy myself like the old lamplighter, only working a double shift, making the day a little brighter for the people on whom I try them. The bagger, in my kindly reckoning, goes home that night to tell about this nutty dude at work who asked for a suede bag (you had to be there, I'm afraid he'll have to add).

"I please myself," says Frank Cowperwood, in Theodore Dreiser's trilogy, *The Titan*. Wish I could say the same, but, alas, I am not always able to arrange it. So instead I try, as best I can, to amuse myself, and fairly often succeed. The trick, as I see it, is to continue to do so for as long as possible without getting punched out.

Joseph Epstein

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Moyers on Moyers

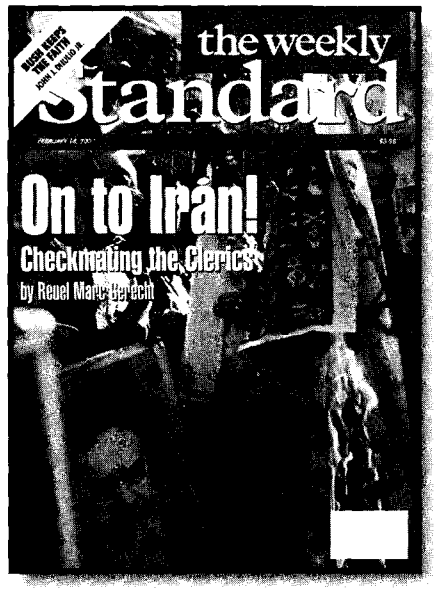
Stephen F. Hayes opens his attack on me ("PBS's Televangelist," Feb. 25) by claiming that in PBS specials following September 11 I interviewed, among others, "Cornel West, O.J. attorney Alan Dershowitz, and *Vagina Monologues* playwright Eve Ensler." He gets it right only once. I have never met or interviewed Alan Dershowitz or Eve Ensler.

Two errors on the opening pitch: Not a promising start. But it's the standard (no pun intended) Hayes maintains for the remainder of his game. For example, by garbling the record, he tries to score points on comments I once made about interviewing right-wingers who want to "hit first and ask questions later." But he says nothing about all the interviews I have conducted over the years with such widely admired conservatives as Ronald Reagan (for a full hour on PBS, from his ranch—the first such interview he permitted there), George H.W. Bush (also a full PBS hour), Sandra Day O'Connor (another hour), Edwin Meese, Robert Bork, Leon Kass, Thomas Wolfe, Mary Ann Glendon, John Lukacs, etc. To have included such information, of course, would have spoiled Hayes's polemic.

Another example: Hayes bravely quotes an anonymous "Republican adviser" as saying that "the only qualification for Moyers [in hosting the new PBS series *NOW with Bill Moyers*] is that he keeps comparing conservative Republicans to the Taliban." I asked Hayes to provide chapter-and-verse for his source's allegation. He didn't because he couldn't. Check the transcripts yourself: I used that description once in a broadcast to describe Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell when they piously agreed with bin Laden that "what happened on 9/11 was God's judgment on a decadent America."

So it goes: Paragraph after paragraph, replete with willful misrepresentation, deceitful juxtaposition, and outright error, with a little hypocrisy thrown in for flavor. Hayes makes a big to-do out of the fact that I wouldn't disclose to him what my income is, but as a journalist I am no more obligated to publish my earnings than is Weekly Standard editor William Kristol—less so, in fact, since I took no money from Enron. Furthermore, as I told him, I follow the same proprietary rules as every other independent production company in the field—from Ken Burns and MacNeil/Lehrer Productions to productions of *Firing Line* and *McLaughlin and Company.*

Hayes seems to think he was being spun when he called my office seeking an interview and was told my doctor had advised me not to talk "on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays." But that was a real case of severe laryngitis and the doctor had indeed said that I shouldn't talk if I wanted to broadcast later in the week, a point I would have shared with Hayes if he had asked. (The laryngitis mysteriously struck, by the way, soon after a rumor circulated that a voodoo



doll bearing my likeness had been delivered to the office of Dick Armey from the Heritage Foundation, where Hayes served his apprenticeship in polemics. I have been unable to confirm that rumor, but because of the credibility of the source—an anonymous "Republican adviser"—I have decided to publish it.)

You get the drift. Hayes had a job to do, and he did it. His assignment was not to get it right but to get it Right. Periodically for twenty years now the right-wing complex in Washington has come after me in order to get at PBS (always—surprise, surprise!—just before the appropriations process in Congress). It's not a pretty sight—Reed Irvine wielding a bludgeon or David Horowitz an axe—but as Hayes so patently demonstrates, since when do Tony Soprano's boys concern themselves with aesthetics in dispatching their quarry?

What raised the ideological ire this time is the recent Middleton Lecture at the LBJ Library, where I talked once again about how the nexus of corporate power, market fundamentalism, and money in politics is transforming democracy, undermining capitalism, and polarizing America. I was tempted to take out an advertisement to reprint it here to demonstrate just how grossly Hayes distorts my meaning, but I hate to think I'd be subsidizing Rupert Murdoch. So I will just recommend that your more fair-minded readers check it out for themselves at *www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/press.hom/lecturetext/moyerstext.asp.*

Bill Moyers
New York, NY

Stephen F. Hayes responds: Bill Moyers writes that my article on him features "paragraph after paragraph" of "willful misrepresentation, deceitful juxtaposition, and outright error." He comes up with just two examples.

Let's deal with the more important complaint first. Moyers is unhappy that someone carped to me: "The only qualification for Moyers" to be selected to anchor PBS's post-Sept. 11 programming "is that he keeps comparing conservative Republicans to the Taliban." Moyers claims that I "didn't" and "couldn't" substantiate this.

Leaving aside the fact that the source was speaking sarcastically—a type of rhetoric that Bill Moyers otherwise shows great facility with—I provided several examples of such comparisons in my brief chat with him. Indeed, Moyers was a pioneer in deploying the conservatives-as-Taliban trope. Here's what he said in a speech last March 22: "When [producer] Sherry [Jones] and I reported the truth behind the news of the Iran-contra scandal for a *Frontline* documentary called 'High Crimes and Misdemeanors,' the right-wing Taliban in town went running to the ayatollahs in Congress, who decried the fact that public television was committing—horrors—journalism."

And of course, the speech at the LBJ library that he references is one long exercise in drawing parallels between ter-

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rorists and conservatives. Both are "true believers" who "threaten our democracy," he says.

When I interviewed him, Moyers didn't deny, as he does now, that I was able to substantiate my source's gibe. Instead, he sought to draw a distinction between what he says on the air and the politically partisan red meat he serves up on the lecture circuit. In fact, when I asked him about the LBJ speech, he said "That's fair game, you've got it on the record there." Then he compared himself to conservative eminence and longtime *Firing Line* host William F. Buckley. "Bill Buckley used to make speeches all the time to Republicans and conservative audiences, even while he was conducting the longest-running show in PBS history. But did you find those things he said in his speeches in his show? Not necessarily." So much for what I "didn't" and "couldn't" substantiate.

As for the other allegation of error, Moyers says that he has "never met or interviewed Alan Dershowitz or Eve Ensler." I wrote that a PBS special Moyers co-hosted with Gwen Ifill on September 20 featured "two hours of live dialogue between Moyers and, among others, author and rapper extraordinaire Cornel West, O.J. attorney Alan Dershowitz, and *Vagina Monologues* playwright Eve Ensler." PBS called the show a "dialogue from Washington, New York, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco . . . co-anchored by Moyers (in New York) and Ms. Ifill (in Washington)."

Contrary to the impression Moyers's letter left, Dershowitz and Ensler did appear on the show. Ensler's appearance was a pretaped monologue (what else). Dershowitz, interviewed by Emily Rooney, appeared live from WGBH studios in Boston. My use of the word "dialogue," echoing PBS's spiel, may have been imprecise. If so, I'm certainly willing to stipulate that Bill Moyers doesn't personally interview or meet all the people who appear on his shows.

Cain and Abel

David Tell's editorial on Judy Genshaft was a case of either bad reporting, bad editing, or racial profiling ("Judy Genshaft's Ordeal," Feb. 11). I will only vouch for one person about whom he writes—since I know little about Judy Genshaft, the president of the University of South Florida, or the professor, Sami Al-Arian, who is the editorial's subject.

I was shocked to read that one of the reasons Tell is attacking Al-Arian is for his links to Khalil Shikaki, whom Tell smears by association, since the only biographical identification he gives for Shikaki is that Shikaki's brother was a leader of Islamic Jihad. Had he done some very simple reporting, Tell would have easily discovered that Khalil Shikaki's politics bear no resemblance to his brother's. Dr. Shikaki, one of the most respected political scientists in the Palestinian world, has a Ph.D. from Columbia University, teaches at Bir Zeit, and heads the Ramallah-based Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. He also conducts an ongoing polling project with Dr. Yaacov Shamir, in conjunction with the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at Israel's Hebrew University. He has an article in the current issue of *Foreign Affairs* that is considered one of the most important pieces to come out of the intifada regarding the Palestinian political landscape. And he has literally put his life on the line by openly working with and supporting academics at the Hebrew University, along with Israeli and American Jews who are working toward coexistence and peace (unless it is that Tell opposes the Israeli peace camp and, therefore, Shikaki). The next time David Tell wants to write about Khalil Shikaki, he can easily find his academic bona fides on the web at *www.truman.huji.ac.il.*

Jo-Ann Mort
National Secretary, Americans for Peace Now
Brooklyn, NY

David Tell responds: In the early 1990s, Khalil Shikaki shared Tampa, Florida, office space with the man who would soon succeed his brother as head of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Also in that office at the same time were a principal founder of the organization and a third man, University of South Florida professor Sami Al-Arian.

My piece was about Al-Arian, whose association with and support for international terrorism are now the subject of a major "academic freedom" dispute. The identity of Khalil Shikaki's brother is relevant to that dispute. But Khalil Shikaki himself, whose background and reputation Jo-Ann Mort accurately describes, is not. I regret having failed to make that clear.

Dems Should Judge Not

Terry Eastland is correct. Judge Charles Pickering is being borked ("Borking Judge Pickering," Feb. 18). Pickering represents what is good about Mississippi and how far our state has come in the last thirty years.

It is unfortunate that the Democrats have decided to return to their ways of opposing good Christian men on false charges. Pickering is indeed guilty of being a hard working Christian who exemplifies Christian values in his daily life. While I don't always agree with his decisions—especially the ones against my clients—I respect Judge Pickering and his performance as a member of the judiciary. He should be confirmed.

During the Clinton years, the Democrats decried John Ashcroft's opposition to a Missouri judge that he had strong concerns about. Their position then was that judicial confirmation should not be about partisan politics. Judge Pickering's confirmation process only proves that the Democrats will change their position depending upon what position best suits them at the moment.

T. Kenneth Griffis Jr.
Ridgeland, MS

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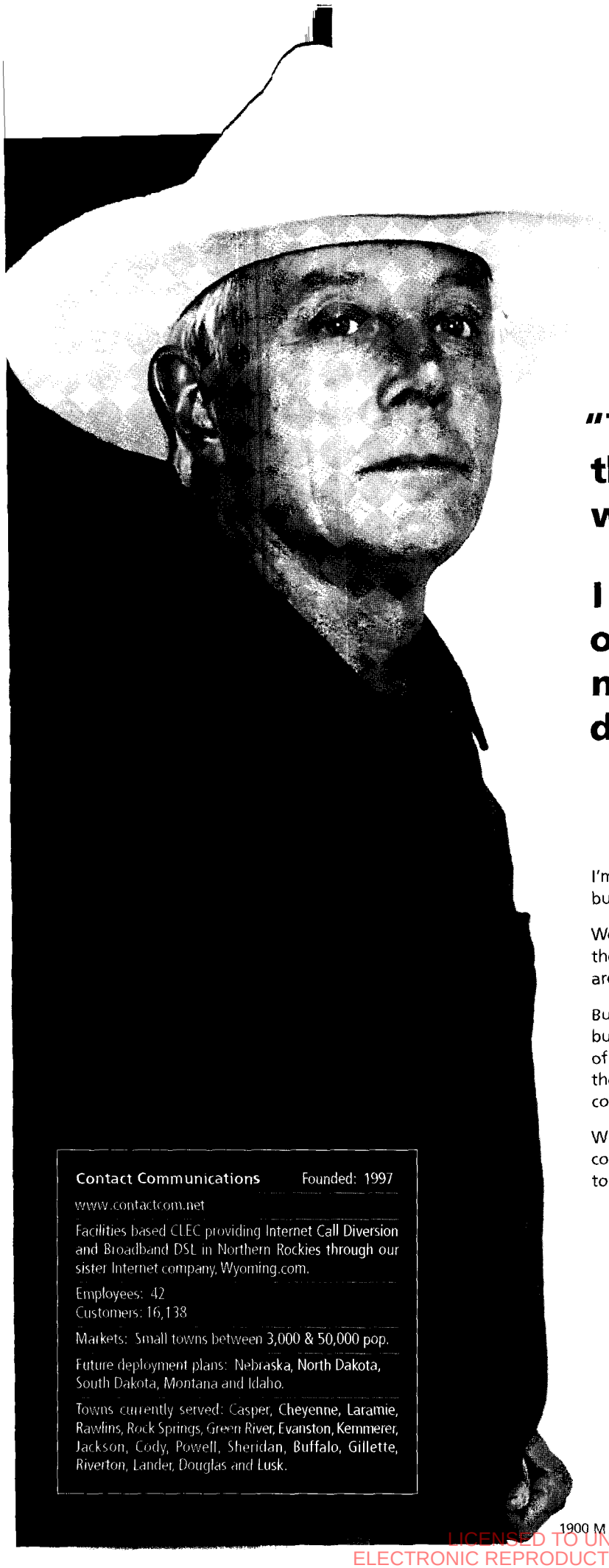

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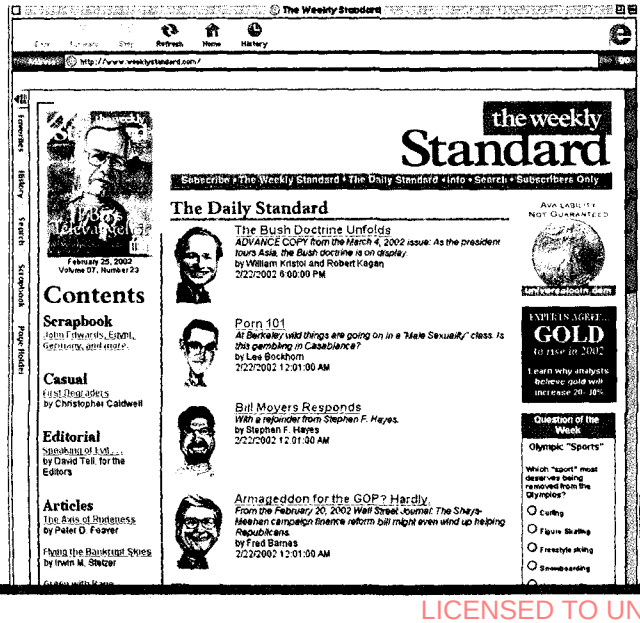

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The Bush Doctrine Unfolds

The full sweep of the new Bush Doctrine was on display this past week, as President Bush traveled through North Asia delivering a consistent and powerful message: American security and global security require a determined assault not just on terrorists but on the three-headed hydra of tyranny, terror, and weapons of mass destruction. The imperative of regime change was the core message of Bush's State of the Union address. This week Bush made plain that the implications of his doctrine go beyond North Korea, Iran, and Iraq, the "axis of evil." Just as the Reagan Doctrine—primarily aimed at overthrowing Communist regimes—ended up toppling right-wing dictatorships in the Philippines and South Korea, so, too, the Bush Doctrine could help undo dictatorships not only in Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, but also in, for example, China and Saudi Arabia.

In South Korea, the president did not back down an inch from his characterization of the Pyongyang government as "evil." Unmoved by the international rehabilitation of the newly smiling Kim Jong Il, Bush spoke with Reaganesque simplicity: "I will not change my opinion on Kim Jong Il until he frees his people." Earlier in Japan, Bush went out of his way to declare his solidarity with and commitment to the democratic people of Taiwan, a stance he then forcefully reiterated in Beijing. Rather than kowtow in the fashion of Clinton, who used his visit to China as an opportunity to distance America from Taiwanese democracy, Bush told the Chinese government plainly that he intended to abide by the Taiwan Relations Act. Last spring, Bush promised to "do what it takes" to defend Taiwan. Beijing's leaders ought to be convinced now that he means it.

The most important part of Bush's Asia trip, however—the part that may best be remembered by future generations of both Americans and Chinese—came in his speech to students at Tsinghua University, which was televised live in China. Under the pretext of explaining to the Chinese people how the American system of government really works, Bush articulated a devastating critique of the Beijing dictatorship and called on the Chinese people to demand change. In the United States, he said, "No one is above the law . . . everyone stands equal." In the United States, "All political power . . . is limited and temporary, and only given by a free vote of the people." In the United States, Bush said, "You can support the policies of our government, or you are free to openly disagree with them." Every Chinese citizen who heard Bush's words understood the invidious comparison he was drawing between American freedom and Chinese tyranny. Everyone heard his message: that the tyranny under which they suffer must be changed or brought down. And to the old argument so often proffered by Chinese tyrants and their American apologists—that China is not "ready" for democracy—well, Bush had an answer for that, too. "Those who fear freedom sometimes argue it could lead to chaos, but it does not, because freedom means more than every man for himself."

It is hard to recall a more forceful statement of American democratic principles on Chinese soil, or a more pointed rebuke to the Beijing dictatorship. To find a historical precedent, one must go back to Ronald Reagan's 1988 speech at Moscow State University. And, of course, Bush's call for freedom and regime change in China marks a striking shift away from the "realist," commercialist orthodoxy that has dominated the Republican foreign policy establishment for more than a decade. You wouldn't have heard this kind of talk from the first Bush administration, and, in truth, you might not have heard it from this administration, either, before September 11.

But September 11 really did change everything. President Bush grasped that our response to the attacks must go beyond simply destroying some terrorist groups, important as that is. He also understood the underlying truth that there's no substitute for American leadership—a leadership that is willing not just to use our military strength, but also to defend and advance liberal democratic principles. George W. Bush is now a man with a mission. As it happens, it is America's historic mission.

—Robert Kagan and William Kristol

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Presidential Commission Shocks White House: Recommends Marijuana Should Be 'Decriminalized'*

Washington, DC - A Presidential commission's report recommends that marijuana be legalized.

The Commission concluded that marijuana users "are essentially indistinguishable from their non-marijuana using peers by any fundamental criterion other than their marijuana use."

They found that, "Neither the marijuana user nor the drug itself can be said to constitute a danger to public safety."

The Commission recommended "Decriminalization of possession of marijuana for personal use on both the state and federal levels."

The Commission's findings caught many by surprise since both the President and the former Republican governor of Pennsylvania who chaired the Commission have reputations for tough 'law and order' approaches to drug law enforcement.

The President refused to read the report. He said in a news conference, "I am against legalizing marijuana. Even if the Commission does recommend that it be legalized, I will not follow that recommendation."

*** The Shafer Commission issued its report on marijuana policy on March 22, 1972-30 years ago. President Nixon ignored the scientific advice he was given. The Netherlands, which had a similar commission, did not. Today, marijuana use in Holland is half that of the U.S.[1]**

Over 100,000 Americans die annually from consumption of alcohol.[2]
None (0) die from consumption of marijuana.[3]
734,497 arrests were made for marijuana in 2000.[4] Countless families are destroyed.

Is criminalizing marijuana use sensible public policy? Is it time for marijuana to be treated like alcohol?

Kevin B. Zeese, President, Common Sense for Drug Policy
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202-299-9780 * 202-518-4028 (fax)

[1] Netherlands: Lifetime prevalence of marijuana use ages 12-up, 15.6%; past month, 2.5% (source: Abraham, Manja D., et al., "Licit and Illicit Drug Use in the Netherlands, 1997" (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Center for Drug Research, Sept. 1999); US: lifetime prevalence of marijuana use ages 12-up, 34.2%; past month, 4.8% (source: SAMHSA, US Dept. of Health and Human Services, "Summary of Findings from the 2000 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (Rockville, MD: SAMHSA, Sept. 2001), p. 132, Table F.2, from the web at http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/NHSDA/2kNHSDA/2kNHSDA.htm.

[2] "Number of deaths and age-adjusted death rates per 100,000 population for categories of alcohol-related mortality, United States and States, 1979-96," National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, from the web at http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/databases/armort01.txt.

[3] Reports of the Drug Abuse Warning Network show no deaths attributed to marijuana; see also Joy, Janet E., et al., "Marijuana and Medicine: Assessing the Science Base," Institute of Medicine, (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1999); and US Dept. of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration, "In the Matter of Marijuana Rescheduling Petition," Docket #86-22, Sept. 6, 1988, p. 57.

[4] Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Report, "Crime in America 2000" (Washington, DC: US Dept. of Justice, Oct. 2001).

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the weekly Standard

A Nomination Worth Fighting For

Among the announcements White House press secretary Ari Fleischer made in his daily briefing on February 15 was this: "The president believes in and will fight for the nomination of [Charles] Pickering." Pickering certainly could use the president's help. His nomination—the first judicial confirmation battle of the Bush presidency—is in trouble and may fail even with Bush's engagement. But Pickering's confirmation chances will improve if the president stands up for him. With the Senate returning this week and a Judiciary Committee vote looming, "will fight" must become "is fighting."

In case you're new to the story, Charles Pickering is a federal trial judge, a 1990 appointee of George Bush. Last year George W. Bush designated Pickering for elevation to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee, who hold a 10-to-9 edge, have been digging in their heels against Pickering. If Pickering were to be voted out of committee, he might be confirmed, since two Democrats—Zell Miller of Georgia and Fritz Hollings of South Carolina—have indicated their support. Thus the committee vote is crucial.

Charles Pickering

AP / Wide World Photos

In deciding to target Pickering first among Bush nominees, committee Democrats would seem to have made a peculiar choice. After all, a Democrat-controlled Senate unanimously confirmed Pickering to his district judgeship in 1990. A substantial majority of the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on the Judiciary has now rated him "well qualified," and the ABA, not a conservative body, is an organization Senate Democrats, if not this Republican White House, routinely salute. Consider, too, that Pickering is 64—old as appellate court nominees go. He's unlikely to serve long enough to make a substantial jurisprudential difference, even assuming he's the sort of lawyer apt to make that kind of difference, which administration officials in whispered asides say he's not. Instead, they say he's "Lott's guy."

Lott, as in Trent Lott, a close friend of Pickering. From the first days of the Bush presidency, Lott pushed Bush to nominate Pickering. Bush settled on Pickering the same week in May that James Jeffords left the GOP. Senate Democrats didn't exactly admire Lott when he was majority leader. Now in the majority themselves, they can exact some revenge by opposing Pickering. No other Bush nominee so qualifies as an anti-Lott target. This is petty, yes, but this is the Senate.

Pickering also affords Democrats a chance to raise a topic on which Republicans are easily put on the defensive—race. Democrats have forced Pickering to voice regrets for some things he said and did decades ago that lent support to or failed to oppose the status quo of segregation. The nomination thus has allowed Democrats to strut their presumed moral superiority—notwithstanding the fact that Democrat Robert Byrd of West Virginia was once a member of the Ku Klux Klan, while Pickering prosecuted it and testified against one of its imperial wizards.

With Pickering, the Democrats are pursuing what might be called a strategy of prevention. Because the

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Supreme Court takes so few cases, the nation's 13 appellate courts effectively function as mini-supreme courts. Bush wants to appoint judicial conservatives. His appointees could shift the balance of power in a conservative direction on more of these courts—unless the Senate says no. The necessity for the Democrats is to challenge nominees they see as beatable at low political cost, which they think Pickering is. Absent the president's engagement in the battle, they are right.

Democrats believe the Fifth Circuit is too conservative already, and that Pickering would add to the imbalance. By defeating Pickering—the first of four judges Bush has nominated to the Fifth Circuit, a court of 17 members when at full strength—Democrats aim to tell Bush that he must cease and desist from nominating judicial conservatives to appellate courts and instead pick "mainstream" judges. And, for that matter, "mainstream" Supreme Court justices, should vacancies on the high court occur.

As for Pickering himself, the effort to portray him as "insensitive" on race (racist, if you know how to read these things) is unfair. Democrats have seized on this and that—a law review article on Mississippi's anti-miscegenation statute that he wrote in 1959 as a law student; trivial contact in the early 1970s with the pro-segregationist Mississippi state Sovereignty Commission; and support as a state senator in the 1970s for an open primary bill that the Justice Department blocked on account of its negative impact on black voters. None of this amounts to much when the man is seen in full, for Pickering also stood against the Klan in Mississippi when that took courage and, over the past two decades, has led racial reconciliation efforts in the state. Blacks in Pickering's hometown of Laurel support him even as they wonder what the fuss in Washington is all about. Larry Thomas, owner of a pharmacy in Laurel, told the *New York Times*: "Over the years I've seen him work with black leaders and really try to make an effort to understand and help the community. That's a progressiveness that we need to see more of in this state." A black councilman offered this: "So many people are angry about the past. But if the judge has moved beyond his past, I think we should all try to do the same."

There's really nothing more that Pickering can say in his own behalf. Which of course is his problem, just as it was Robert Bork's problem. But the president can argue publicly for him.

Notwithstanding that the ABA in its review of Pickering found nothing to object to in terms of ethics, committee Democrats have. Last fall, Pickering asked lawyers who had appeared in his court to write letters in support of his nomination. Russell Feingold worries whether this does not raise an "appearance" problem, and a legal ethics expert, consulted by *Legal Times*, has said the solicitation might amount to "unintentional coercion." Pickering's actions strike us as unwise, but not unethical. Another "ethics issue": During the sentencing phase of a cross-burning case in 1995, Pickering, frustrated with the Justice Department's handling of the case, had a phone conversation with the then head of the Civil Division, a friend from Mississippi, who had no line authority over the prosecutors involved and in any case took no action. John Edwards has seized on this phone call to charge Pickering with an "ex parte" communication in violation of the Code of Judicial Conduct. But on close inspection, the allegation falls apart. Ethics authorities disagree.

As a judge, Pickering has at times gone off point, as it were, to offer his views about the law at hand or some public controversy. In a 1993 voting rights case, for example, he criticized the Supreme Court's "one man, one vote" principle. In another, he elaborated his views on federal pension law. Judges of all jurisprudential stripes have been known so to digress, and it's not a practice we'd hold up as ideal. Still, Pickering's record on the bench, taken whole, is not that of a judge who twists the law to reach decisions enforcing his own personal or political views.

Pickering has repeatedly tried to assure committee Democrats that as an appeals court judge he would read the law as it is, not rewrite it to suit his views. But Democrats see that Pickering is a conservative and that he is a judge, and they seem determined to believe that he would be a results-oriented judge. Abortion, as you might expect, is a huge Democratic concern. Pickering, who has never had to rule on an abortion case, disagrees with the Supreme Court's abortion jurisprudence. Long before becoming a judge, he supported a constitutional amendment that would have overturned *Roe* v. *Wade*. Queried on all of this, Pickering has insisted that as an appellate judge he would of course adhere to what the Supreme Court has said on the issue.

There's really nothing more that Pickering can say in his own behalf on that or anything else. Which of course is his problem, just as it was Robert Bork's problem 15 years ago. There's little a judicial nominee can do in his own behalf when the Judiciary Committee is preparing to vote no. Needed in these circumstances is an energetic executive, a president willing to argue publicly for his nominee—in the present case, to challenge the inaccurate and unfair portrayals of Pickering and to expose the Democratic effort for what it is, an attempt to force the president to choose judges more to the liking of Al Gore. Let there be no mistake: Pickering is Bush's nominee, not Trent Lott's. This is a battle for the president to fight, for if Pickering loses, it will be the president's defeat.

—Terry Eastland, for the Editors

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AP / Wide World Photos

Above the fray? The Bushes return from Asia.

Winning by Not Fighting

George W. Bush's partisan strategy of non-partisanship. BY FRED BARNES

IN THE CAPITOL OFFICE of House Republican whip Tom DeLay, a special room is set aside for the White House legislative team. It isn't used much. The president's lobbyists are not a large presence in Congress these days. Bush is concentrating on the war against terrorism and the "axis of evil" and thus avoids legislative fights. On the day the Shays-Meehan campaign finance reform bill passed the House, chief lobbyist Nick Calio chatted with GOP staffers and asked what he could do to help. They answered in unison: Get the president to veto Shays-Meehan. That, Calio responded, isn't going to happen.

Bush's aloof attitude has upset Republicans on Capitol Hill. On campaign finance reform, he declined to press (or have his lobbyists press) for even his own version of the legislation. Rather, comments by White House spokesman Ari Fleischer gave encouragement to Democratic reformers and to Sen. John McCain, their chief GOP ally. McCain, of course, is Bush's Republican nemesis. And the White House has also failed to work aggressively for confirmation of Charles Pickering to the U.S. Court of Appeals until the nomination got into deep trouble. Even now, there have been no Oval Office calls to senators.

There's a rationale and a strategy behind Bush's passive approach. His main role is to be a nonpartisan war president. This is Bush's inclination anyway, and it helps in keeping Democrats on board the war effort. It also turns out to be good politics. His job performance rating has cruised at historically unprecedented heights for nearly six months and some of his popularity has rubbed off on the GOP and congressional Republicans. Meanwhile, as Bush stays above the fray, nearly everyone else in the Republican party, including members of the administration, is assigned the chores of partisan politics. For example, Karl Rove, the White House senior adviser, recently counseled Republicans to exploit the president's success in the war on terrorism in their campaigns this fall against Democrats. He didn't recommend giving the bipartisan war coalition in Congress any credit.

Bush would never *overtly* make his performance as wartime president a partisan matter. In his State of the Union address a month ago, he stressed working with Democrats on an entire agenda of issues in 2002: energy, trade promotion authority, more tax cuts, reauthorization of welfare reform, pension reform, a patients' bill of rights, prescription drug benefits, Social Security overhaul. The question is whether Bush intends to exert himself on behalf of this agenda. Chances are, he won't, either in trying to forge compromises with Democratic leaders or seeking to override their opposition to enact Republican bills.

Only one glitch has marred the president's strategy. For 10 days in mid-February, a TV ad featuring

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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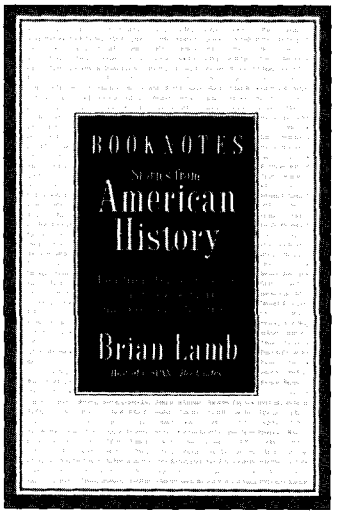

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Bush was aired in five states. The president's comments were from earlier speeches—it was file film—but the ads attacked vulnerable Democratic senators. In the case of Sen. Tim Johnson of South Dakota, the announcer says he voted against a compromise plan to get his state "back to work." Then Bush says, "There's something more important than politics and that's to do our jobs." The announcer closes by saying, "We agree."

White House officials were aware Bush would appear in the ad, and they didn't expect to suffer any heartburn as a result. But they did. Not only did Democrats complain Bush was breaking his pledge of bipartisanship, but so did media commentators. In fact, Bush hadn't promised to be bipartisan on an economic stimulus package. But at the least, it was unseemly for a war president to be the star of attack ads aimed at politicians who support him on the war. Rove was uptight about the whole thing. When Mort Kondracke of *Roll Call* inquired about Bush's role in the ad, Rove sent back word he wouldn't talk about it.

Don't expect Bush to appear in more attack ads, if only because it could diminish his war presidency and his popularity. Positive ads, maybe. Bush doesn't want to overplay his hand as Woodrow Wilson did in 1918. Wilson had appealed for the suspension of partisan politics after the United States entered World War I. But days before the November election, he issued an amazing "open letter" saying the nation needed "undivided leadership . . . and that a Republican Congress would divide that leadership." It backfired. "Even with an allied victory only days away," notes James Barnes in the *National Journal*, "the GOP picked up 19 seats in the House and six in the Senate and seized control of both chambers."

The Bush scheme is the opposite: pursue the war successfully, be mostly nonpartisan, stay out of congressional fights, and gain seats. And who knows? Bush may achieve what Wilson couldn't—one-party leadership in Washington, undivided. ♦

How to Ruin an Institution

Virginia Military Institute ain't what it used to be. BY WOODY WEST

Bunting

JOSIAH BUNTING III, former enlisted Marine, former Army officer, educator, and novelist and, now, retiring superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute, sounded weary and even plaintive as, once again, he tried to defend the traditions of that state-supported academy. He was reacting to a federal judge's recent ruling that VMI's traditional supper prayer—a "brief, nonsectarian, inclusive blessing," as Bunting described it—constitutes a coerced religious exercise. Out, damned spot!

"The founders of VMI, like the founders of our country, were a faithful people, as most Americans, and most cadets, are today," wrote Bunting in the *Wall Street Journal*. "Hearing a brief prayer before supper is no more the establishment of religion than the singing of 'God Bless America,' a prayer set to music. As the Supreme Court observed in approving prayer by salaried legislative chaplains, such prayers are 'no more than a tolerable acknowledgement of beliefs widely held among the people of this country.' Surely a military institute, preparing adults to defend this country, can tolerate exposure to such prayers too." No longer, evidently, not at VMI anyway.

Woody West is associate editor of the Washington Times.

Since he became superintendent in mid-1995, with the state rank of major general, Bunting steadily has had to yield traditional territory of the college founded in 1839. The most significant, of course, was the fierce litigation that led, in 1996, to the Supreme Court's 7-1 decision that the all-male institute had to admit women (Justice Clarence Thomas abstained because his son was a cadet).

Though Bunting opposed the "gender rights" battalions during the media-amplified campaign, he labored after the high court ruled to smooth the transition to a co-ed corps of cadets (the first class with females was graduated last spring; there now are about 60 women among the 1,300 cadets enrolled). And the U.S. Department of Justice late last year ended its scrutiny of the assimilation of women to the college at Lexington.

The lawsuits against the VMI supper prayer and all-male admissions offer a classic instance of how an institution long in the building can be quickly undermined by an assault on its traditions. The strategy is simplicity itself: All that is required is a tenacious motivation, a claim to the moral high ground, and an Order of Battle, so to speak, that includes full mobilization of ideological and political

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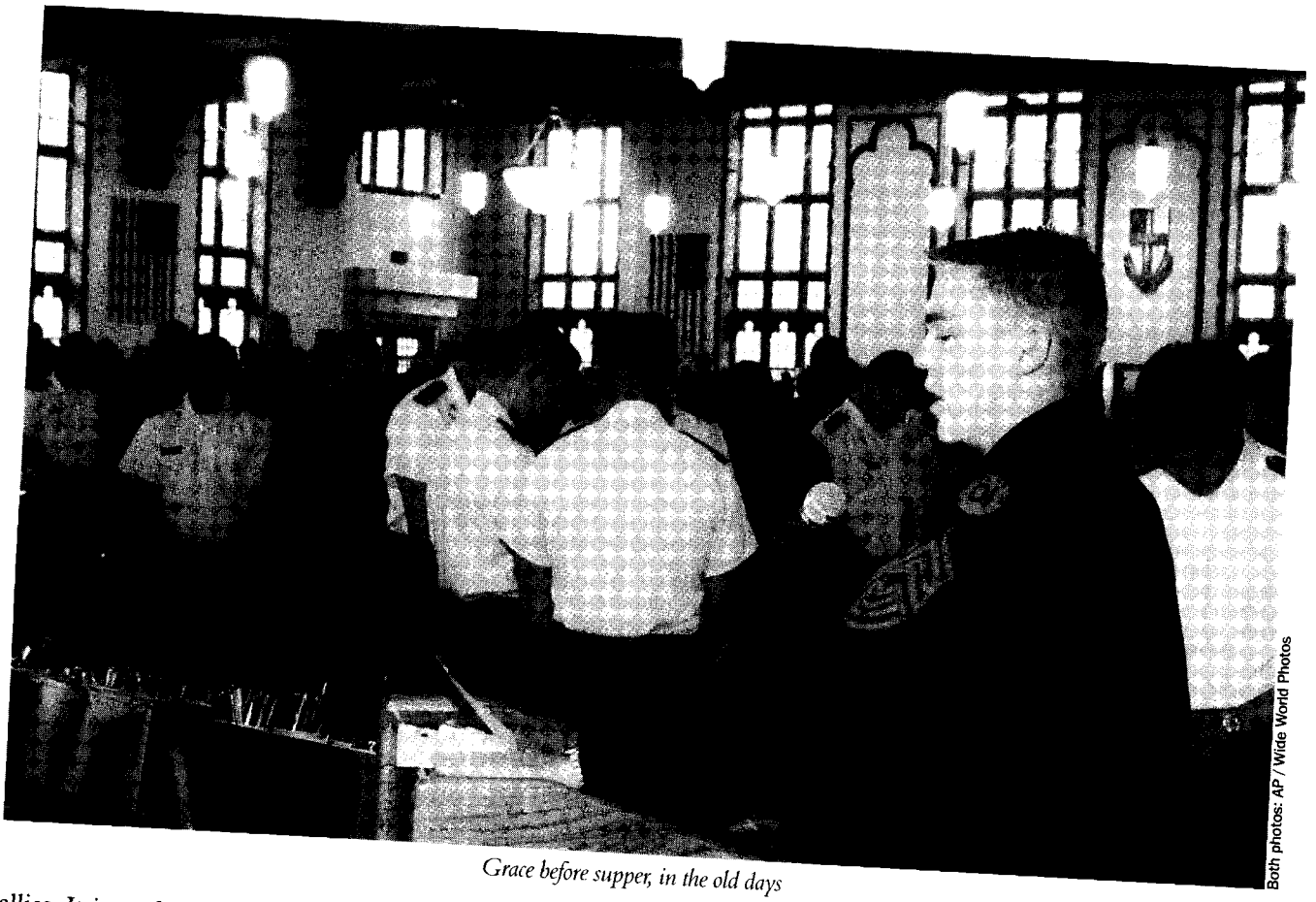

Both photos: AP / Wide World Photos

Grace before supper, in the old days

allies. It is useful if there is a sex peg to hang a complaint on, and better still if there is a military component—the Citadel in South Carolina went down on both counts before VMI.

All traditions obviously are not deserving of respect, and some traditions are more fragile than they might appear. They can wither as the climate in which they were planted is desiccated by time and usage, or evolve into something quite unrecognizable as social trends modify over time. Even deep-rooted traditions are vulnerable to antagonistic external influence—or, for that matter, internal influences. It is indicative that the VMI supper "grace" was challenged by two cadets at Lexington, with the ACLU doing the heavy lifting, of course.

What is critical in a full frontal assault such as that against VMI is that the offending institution not be permitted to catch its breath—keep pounding away. When all-male admissions is overturned, quickly send in another wave, such as the attack on the "religious observance" before supper. And when that is judicially routed, have yet another wave ready to parachute in. And indeed the Virginia ACLU and the national organization's "Women's Rights Project" is ready.

Since females joined the male corps of cadets there have been several predictable instances of he-ing and she-ing. VMI's board of directors responded by insisting that pregnant students leave the college or face expulsion—and the same applies to the student who, as the ACLU letter puts it, "causes" the pregnancy (an odd verb, but let it pass). That seems sufficiently evenhanded. Not so, contends the phalanx of watchdogs. The policy could be in violation of the federal Title IX regulation, as well as violating the Constitution's guarantees of equal protection and the right to privacy.

The "likely consequences" of such a policy, VMI is warned, are litigation "and/or" withdrawal of federal funds. That ought to keep 'em busy for a while, the gang in the ACLU war-room doubtless chuckled, and ordered its researchers to find another potential vulnerability if and when the preggers problem is resolved.

Supporters of VMI warned early in the fracas that when women were admitted, the experience young men were seeking as part of the corps of cadets would not be, could not be, that which they once absorbed. VMI could not remain the same institution. As Bunting recalls the Supreme Court oral arguments on the male admissions case, "Justice [Stephen] Breyer shouted out in the hearing, 'If you have to abandon this so-called adversative system or whatever you call it, I say, So what!'" Enduring traditions deserve at least a thoughtful examination before they are tossed out with the trash, not derision.

The Virginia Military Institute continues to chug along with a fine academic reputation and evidently a fair amount of its historic élan. The transformation of the college over time in fact may come to seem appropriate. But it is not the VMI of Stonewall Jackson, of George C. Marshall, or even the VMI from which Bunting himself was graduated.

Something has been lost, something vital to the soul of the institution, it may well be. But "soul" is a deflated cultural currency, compared with the absolutism of "equality." ♦

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Mother and Father Know Best

A new role for Bush's Health and Human Services Department. BY BETH HENARY

CONVINCED that healthy, two-parent families are best for children, the Bush administration is looking for ways to promote sound marriages among welfare recipients and clients of programs like Head Start. Its point man in the effort is psychologist Wade Horn, assistant secretary of Health and Human Services for children and families and longtime champion of the importance of fathers.

"I don't want to play Cupid," Horn says. "This isn't about telling anybody who should marry who. But when you have a couple who say, we're interested in getting married, or who are already married, it's about helping them develop the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain healthy marriages."

Take the parents of a newborn infant who are unmarried. Already in most states, the fathers are invited to acknowledge paternity, though they may decline. One of Horn's ideas is to encourage hospital paternity workers to ask if couples have considered marriage—more than half have, according to one study—and if so, to offer them information about premarital counseling. He hopes someday to offer interested couples vouchers to help pay for either secular or religious counseling.

This is just "good casework," Horn believes. "You're finding out what it is that your clients are thinking about, and trying to move them in a direction that's healthy."

Or consider Head Start, the Great Society child-development program currently serving over 857,000 low-income children. A tiny minority of these children come from intact, married families. Already Head Start provides parenting classes and job training for the adults, on the theory that these will ultimately benefit the children. Horn proposes adding marriage-enrichment classes to the list, helping couples, for example, improve their listening and conflict negotiation skills. Head Start's regional office in Boston is already offering its satellite centers up to $10,000 each to add marriage enrichment to the weekly lineup.

Wade Horn

AP / Wide World Photos

Another of Horn's projects is to tweak the historic 1996 welfare reform law when it comes up for renewal this year. He wants to make $100 million available to states and nonprofit organizations, on a competitive basis, to improve and expand programs supporting marriage. The money would be shifted out of an existing program intended to lower rates of out-of-wedlock child-bearing that Horn says has accomplished little.

For now, Horn is not pushing more radical ideas he has explored in the past—like financial incentives to discourage out-of-wedlock pregnancies. Until a confirmation conversion, he publicly supported giving married families precedence over single mothers for social services from Head Start to public housing. But Horn's eagerness to see creative experimentation in this field—he backs a West Virginia program that gives married welfare families a $100 benefits bonus each month—has deep roots, stemming from his long experience in the fatherhood movement and the larger marriage movement.

In *The Fatherhood Movement: A Call to Action*, a 1999 collection of essays he edited with David Blankenhorn and Mitchell B. Pearlstein, Horn lays out the consequences of family breakdown—not just a higher incidence of poverty and violence against children, but the further weakening of family bonds as generations pass.

"The argument must be made," he writes, "frequently and with great passion—that society needs a critical mass of married two-parent families, both to raise their own children well and to serve as models for children growing up in alternative family

Beth Henary is an editorial assistant at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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structures. Tragically, we are in great danger today of losing that critical mass; in some communities it has already been lost."

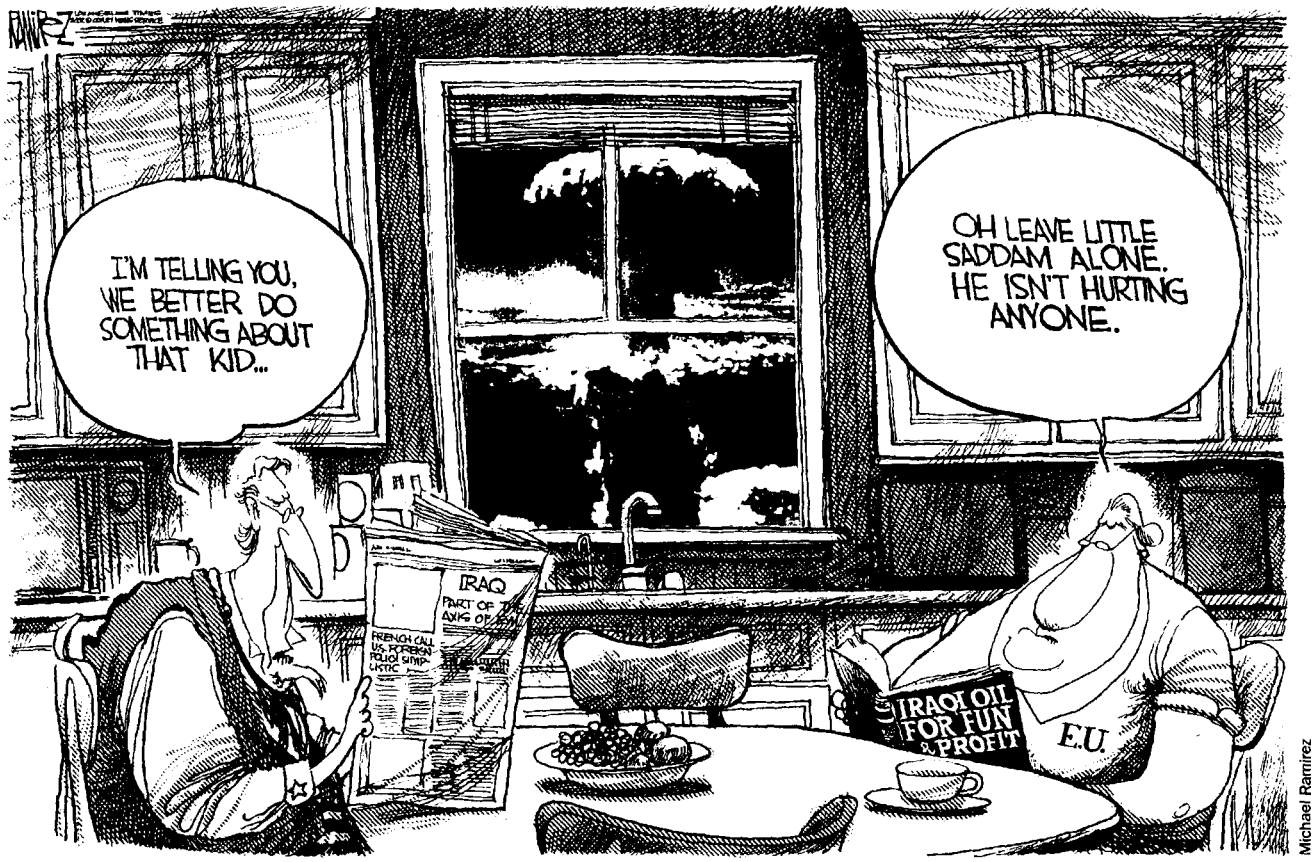
Between presidential appointments—Horn led the Children's Bureau within Health and Human Services under the first President Bush and has served on numerous commissions on children—he co-founded the National Fatherhood Initiative and was its president from 1995 to 2001. He also wrote a weekly "Fatherly Advice" column, exploring factors that contribute to family breakdown—from negative images of dads on television, to the marriage-unfriendly tax code, to "family relativism," the idea that all family structures are socially and morally equivalent. His books include the *New Father Book: What Every Man Needs to Know to be a Good Dad* and *Seven Things States Can Do to Promote Responsible Fatherhood* (with Eric Brenner).

One tactic of the fatherhood and marriage movements has been to publicize the growing body of social science research being done at major universities that has documented benefits of marriage for individuals and society. University of Chicago demographer Linda Waite summarized findings from many disciplines in *The Case for Marriage* (2000). Along with Steven Nock, professor of sociology at the University of Virginia, and Norval Glenn, professor of sociology and American Studies at the University of Texas, Waite more recently chaired a team of 13 family scholars who have produced a booklet-sized digest of the same and similar material.

Unveiled February 14, this report—*Why Marriage Matters: Twenty-One Conclusions from the Social Sciences*—shows, for example, that children and adults in married families enjoy, on average, better health—mental and physical—and make more money than individuals in other types of families. Married mothers have lower rates of depression than single mothers do, and for children the consequences of maternal depression are not nearly as great if the mother is married as they are if the mother is single. Married men have better relationships with their children than single dads.

Horn and others in the marriage movement cite such research not to detract from the hard work of single parents, or to argue that those who do not want to marry should. In the programs under his purview, Horn does not seek to put single mothers out in the cold, but simply to advance the truth he's learned over the years—that mother and father, together, know best. Why anyone would argue with this, he fails to understand.

"Someday someone has to explain to me what the controversy [over his initiatives] is. Why it's a terrible idea to help couples who've chosen marriage for themselves to develop a skill set which will allow them to have a healthy marriage." ♦



Michael Ramirez

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Rebirth of a Nation

Valor and victimhood after September 11

By Tod Lindberg

There are no more yellow ribbons. For more than 20 years, in times of travail, the yellow ribbons have come out. The Iranian hostage crisis of 1979-80 called forth a nationwide flowering of yellow ribbons. And at one time or another since then—can this really all have been wrought by Tony Orlando and Dawn singing "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree"?—the yellow ribbon has been pressed into service as a symbol of hope amid adversity, an expression of longing for the return of those who are not home. In accordance with past practice, the aftermath of the attack on the twin towers could surely have been an occasion for yellow ribbons: thousands lost and feared dead, the uncertainty of the families of the missing, the conclusion growing inevitable that even the bodies might never be recovered. And in fact, in the first day or two, one did see a few yellow ribbons, usually in a collage with a photograph of someone missing, held desperately by a loved one still in shock. But then, without comment, the yellow ribbons were gone. All the ribbons now are red, white, and blue.

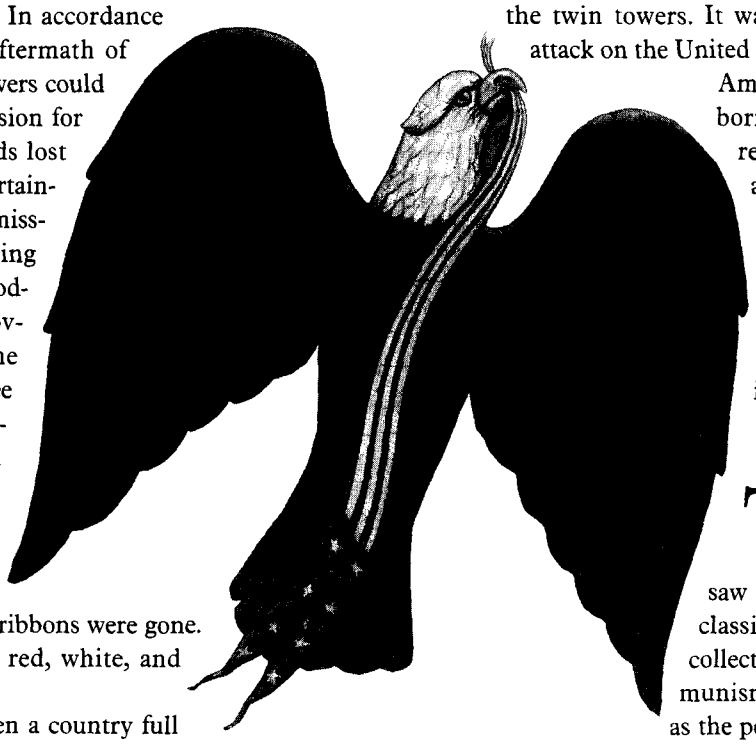

Illustration by Marc Burckhardt

The difference between a country full of yellow ribbons and a country full of red, white, and blue ribbons—and buttons, bumper stickers, lapel pins, scarves, neckties, billboards, and flags of all size and description—neatly captures the passing of one era and the birth of another, as well as the character of each. The yellow ribbon is the symbol of the victim—of the aggrieved individual, someone powerless at the hands of the powerful. The victim's opposite number is the self-satisfied individual, master of his own life and times. The United States of September 10 was a place peopled amply with both types. The private concerns of people, whether satisfied or unsatisfied, were at the forefront of daily life.

The red, white, and blue ribbons are the symbol of something different: a nation. Which is to say, Americans with a sense of themselves as a people, countrymen, united by something that is precisely not private. The red, white, and blue were a product of a sudden sense of solidarity, the felt need to express the view that an attack on one is an attack on all. It wasn't that nearly 3,000 individuals died in the twin towers. It was that they died in an attack on the United States.

American solidarity wasn't born that day; it was revealed. After a long absence, Americans returned to the public square they had left for their private gardens, and to make sure everyone knew, they draped it in red, white, and blue.

The last two decades of the twentieth century saw the apparent triumph of classical liberalism. The old collectivist aspirations of communism and socialism, as well as the political control over society they entailed, gave way to a new respect for the individual and for the system in which individuals seem to prosper collectively, namely, democratic capitalism. These decades saw a tremendous flourishing of human freedom, and while the gains were neither universal nor uniform across the globe, they were unmistakable where they occurred.

Now, this was all to the good. But it did give rise to certain distortions of perspective, themselves the product of the focal point of all the accomplishment, the individual.

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In 1992, my Hoover Institution colleague Charles J. Sykes published an incisive book called *A Nation of Victims: The Decay of the American Character*. In it, he argued that "perhaps the most extraordinary phenomenon of our time has been the eagerness with which more and more groups and individuals—members of the middle class, auto company executives and pampered academics included—have defined themselves as victims of one sort or another." He noted, "In a culture of soundbites and slogans substituted for rational argument, the claim that one is a victim has become one of the few universally recognized currencies of intellectual exchange."

The victim is the supreme authority on his own grievance. Others with something to say on the subject of the grievance in question must defer to the victim, whose unique experience as victim lends him an unimpeachable righteousness, which he does not hesitate to assert. Thus, one may be told that until one has gone through what the victim has gone through, one cannot really know what it's like to be victimized in this way—until one is black, a rape victim, gay, disabled, a war veteran, a cancer survivor, a family member of someone who died in a massacre, and so on, one cannot know what it is like, and so one ought to defer, if not shut up. It's worth noting that the appeal of victimhood transcends political divisions in the United States. Republicans on Capitol Hill have been tireless champions of "victim's rights" where the victimization is due to crime. And I have been at more than one black-tie Washington event in which a roomful of people including current and former senior government officials have stood up to cheer a conservative who has just finished describing victimization at the hands of the Left.

Victims come in groups, and typically these groups are minorities as against a majority that is responsible in some collective sense for the victims' unjust treatment. But this is not necessarily so. Women outnumber men, but it is no rebuttal to the claim that women are the victims of men to cite the greater number of women. The essential element is an imbalance of power, as perceived by the victim.

The paradox of victimization is that claiming this status is actually an assertion of superiority. Whatever handicap one suffers as a result of victimization, because the handicap is unjust, it cannot be said to diminish one. When a victim claims a right to fair treatment, those who have already been treated fairly (or better)—those with greater power—are called upon not only to treat the victim fairly but also to acknowledge the victim's status as someone who has been treated unfairly. This status is permanent, quite apart from the remedy of fair treatment, even if the latter is forthcoming. This status thus confers a permanent claim to speak with righteousness on the subject in question. And it will be up to the victims themselves to decide whether and when and to what degree the underlying power relations that gave rise to their victimization have really changed. This is what Bill Clinton means when he says African Americans are the conscience of the United States.

Yet the group character of expression of a sense of victimization is misleading. Regarding oneself as a victim is a fundamental expression of self. This is not to say that one has a choice; a woman who has been raped is a rape victim and is going to regard herself as such. But it's the rape of the individual that makes the victim, not the relationship between this rape and other rapes. Obviously, the fact that suffering is individual, even if more than one person suffers, is all the more important to cases in which a sense of oneself as a victim is, so to speak, more optional. Although I have ridden bicycles, I have never felt myself to be a victim of "motorism," as one professor quoted by Sykes claimed to be. That someone else should feel himself to have suffered this injustice does not enable him to arouse, against my wishes, such a feeling in me (although he is welcome to try; the activity goes by the name of consciousness-raising).

The danger in making generalizations about victimhood is insensitivity. The conclusion that victims' claims ultimately amount to an assertion of superior status tells us nothing about whether they should be taken seriously as victims or in what way. Sykes, in *A Nation of Victims*, has an answer to this, juxtaposing the newer "victimism" with an older "American character" whose ethic is personal responsibility; he finds the latter to be in a state of "decay," the result being a profusion of bogus "rights" claims.

But it's here, I think, that we meet another character of recent times, inversely related to but less recognized than the victim. He is the "unvictim." At his extreme, he sees himself as "a Master of the Universe," in Tom Wolfe's unforgettable phrase from *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. He is personal responsibility in flesh and blood, in that he believes himself to be something very close to the sole agent of his own achievement. The unvictim sees his success as the product of his hard work, his persistence (especially in adversity), and his determination.

Above all, he has never allowed himself to think of himself as a victim, as powerless before powerful forces. When faced with a setback, the unvictim dusts himself off and looks forward, not backward. He thinks others should do the same. If others fail to "take responsibility," they make the least of their situation, however bad it may be, when they could make more. In the United States, some measure of success is available to everyone who just buck-

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les down, in the unvictim's credo. As for those whom the unvictim deems failures, he does indeed hold them personally responsible for failure. The harshness of this judgment is mitigated in the unvictim's mind by the possibility, available to all, of reversing ill fortune immediately by taking personal responsibility, and also perhaps by the unvictim's memories of his own personal failures as things he was able to overcome. Rush Limbaugh is arguably America's leading unvictim.

Some would say that the unvictim is a member of an oppressor class. Collectively, this class is acting to maintain its power over others and its position of privilege. "Personal responsibility," in this view, is just code for perpetuating the system from which the unvictims gain advantage. They are the authors of their success only collectively, and only at the expense of those whom they collectively oppress.

This argument, based once again on an assumption of false consciousness on the part of those it describes, similarly attempts to derive a group identity from what are distinctly individual feelings. Unvictims may have certain political views in common, but at bottom, these are convictions in favor of a politics of individuality. Once again, this group of people is not a collective, conscious or unconscious, in the sense of acting collectively. What is wrongly described as class-based political behavior—in this case, oppression—is actually the sum of thoroughgoingly individualist concerns.

In the pre-September 11 world in which both the victim and the unvictim flourished, so did the yellow ribbon as a symbol of victimization as well as the urge to tear down yellow ribbons.

There is obviously a certain correspondence between "victimism" and the principal concerns of the Democratic party, as well as between "unvictimism" and the concerns of the Republican party. But neither tendency is wholly confined within either party, nor is it the case that the two cannot commingle, or at least exist as contradictory impulses, within individuals.

Notwithstanding our sometime preoccupation with our partisanship and division, it is time to quit looking at the differences between the two tendencies and start looking at what they have in common. If we have been a nation of victims, we have also been a nation of unvictims. In each case it is the apotheosis of the individual, of private concern. Domestic political dispute then comes down to a quarrel over whether government is an instrument of self-actualization or an obstacle to self-actualization.

In the pre-September 11 world in which both the victim and the unvictim flourished, so did the yellow ribbon as a symbol of victimization, *as well as* the urge to tear down yellow ribbons as proof of unvictimization. What was really missing all along, as became clear with the appearance of red, white, and blue ribbons, was the nation.

The high-water mark of victimism may have been the solicitude Attorney General John Ashcroft displayed last summer toward the survivors and the families of the dead with regard to the execution of Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh. Ashcroft repeatedly maintained that he personally drew great strength from his encounters with the victims. He even went so far as to arrange for closed-circuit television transmission of McVeigh's demise by lethal injection. The viewing room in the death house of the Indiana federal prison was, of course, too small to accommodate more than a handful of victims, whom government officials had determined to number in the thousands. Yet viewing McVeigh's end was something Ashcroft actually called a "right" the victims enjoyed (though of course, not an obligation). In the end, a couple hundred availed themselves of Ashcroft's generosity, gathering at a site in Oklahoma City to watch.

In viewing victims' rights as the primary end of the justice system, Ashcroft (certainly without reflection) placed the U.S. Constitution and laws at the service of the private wishes of victims. Society was set aside; it was as if McVeigh killed 168 people without doing the United States itself an injury. Yet clearly he did. His stated purpose was to do so. But it is not even necessary that he fancied himself a revolutionary in order to see that murder is a crime against society and its laws, not merely against a particular individual.

As for a high-water mark for unvictimism, perhaps the selection of Jeff Bezos, founder and CEO of *Amazon.com*, as *Time*'s 1999 "person of the year" will do. This was arguably both the culmination of the giddy enthusiasm about the "new economy" and the apotheosis of the entrepreneur. Twenty years earlier, George Gilder claimed in *Wealth and Poverty* to have found a self-sustaining moral basis for capitalism that would ensure its perpetuation despite its supposed contradictions. By the middle of the 1980s, in *The Spirit of Enterprise*, he was describing entrepreneurs in heroic terms, single-minded in their pursuit of visions that would enrich not only themselves, but all the rest of us. The future of capitalism was one of "infinite possibilities" and "inestimable treasure."

At the time, these ideas met with substantial resistance, to put it mildly—from the criminal prosecution of junk-bond impresario Michael Milken to the widespread

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use of the sobriquet "Decade of Greed." What changed by 2000 was that consequential resistance had simply ceased. Gilder described billionaires as heroes because of the wealth they created for others. In Jeff Bezos, *Time* was celebrating a billionaire entrepreneur whose company hadn't yet made any money. The pursuit of private gain, once thought to have socially useful consequences, was now a subject of celebration in itself, never mind the consequences.

These radically private views did not survive September 11. How could they? What on earth could John Ashcroft do to accommodate the "rights" of the victims, i.e. the survivors and the family members of the dead, in the event an al Qaeda member receives a death sentence for complicity in the attack? Will he invite them to the Meadowlands to watch the execution on the JumboTron? Meanwhile, the lesson for the devotees of unvictimism is that no one is ever sole author of his success, that life is never merely private, that self-sufficiency is an illusion made possible only by forgetting that individuals live in societies that shape them—and that the security they enjoy as a result of the nation they live in is not a given, but subject to challenge by enemies.

To judge by opinion polls and overwhelming anecdotal evidence, virtually everyone at once understood the importance of the American nation. The terrorist attack was not simply an act affecting individual victims, but an attack on the United States. The dead were not just victims, they were casualties, to be mourned not just in their particularity (though the *New York Times* has done a remarkable job with its vignettes) but also abstractly, as any given American in a war in which the enemy's target is all Americans. "There but for the grace of God go I": This is a sentiment centered not on the satisfactions of being oneself but on the plight of others. It was almost universally felt.

It is also striking that Americans seemed to be as one on the question of what to do, and this from the very moment they knew what was hitting them. As others have noted, the counterattack in the terror war began not over Afghanistan on October 7, but on September 11 in the skies over Pennsylvania, when a 32-year-old businessman named Todd Beamer entered the history books with the battle cry, "Let's roll!" The passengers, on cell phones, had figured out what the hijackers intended, and they were determined to prevent it. They lost their lives, but the mission they conceived and executed by themselves, without instruction, was a success.

Was Todd Beamer a victim? Of course—but not in any sense that can be said to diminish the fact that he was a hero. Surely he would rather have been somewhere else that day, and I can't imagine anyone rationally wishing to trade places with him. But I think that when most people think about him, they find not someone to pity but someone to admire, someone who has set an example that, in the event they ever find themselves in a similar position, they would aspire to emulate. The stories since of passengers who have more or less spontaneously risen up and subdued the likes of would-be "shoe bomber" Richard Reid and other persons behaving bizarrely on airplanes suggest that this is something to which many people have now given considerable thought.

These are cases in which people have taken action on their own. But that does not make the actions wholly private. Self-defense (if, indeed, that was the motive of their actions) is not the same as the self-actualization of victims and unvictims. The private focus of the latter presupposes self-preservation, without acknowledging the presupposition. When Beamer and the others rose up, they were responding not only to a harm they themselves were suffering, but also to an act of war, which is to say, an injury to the society of which they were members. They were acting not just to save their own lives, but the lives of other Americans. Self-defense is always socially sanctioned because what gives rise to it is always a wrong against society in addition to a wrong against a particular person.

There are at least some signs that this spirit of self-defense has new resonance well beyond the scope of the war on terrorism. When a disgruntled ex-student returned to the Appalachian School of Law in January and opened fire, killing a student, a professor, and the school's dean, other students there, some armed, quickly tackled him and subdued him. This is not especially unusual in the United States. But it does stand in marked contrast, for example, to the hypercautious response, including from SWAT team members, at Columbine High School in response to a shooting spree by two students there. And if airline passengers were once passive during hijackings on the grounds that this course afforded them the best chance of surviving the ordeal, those days are over. Indeed, it's probably fair to say that any would-be hijackers in the future had better have martyrdom in mind, since passengers will assume they do and will do everything they can to overpower them, if necessary crashing the plane in the belief that they are protecting the White House, the Eiffel Tower, or Westminster. Non-suicidal hijackers have little credibility with passengers and crew these days.

If people now feel they know what to do to fight back in a way that they didn't before September 11, it's also true that at the national level, there was no doubt about the response. There was no question of shrugging and moving on, or of acting only in a symbolic way. Talk of the "root

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causes" of terrorism, never popular, receded into the mists once people saw the videotape of Osama bin Laden having a good laugh over the whole thing. It was instantly clear to Americans that the time had come to fight, and the war could be a long one. That sense has not let up.

Poll evidence suggests that most Americans think what we are doing is obviously necessary. We have gathered a substantial amount of international support for our actions, but among our allies, sentiment that we are doing the right thing understandably trails our own. One of the questions is framed roughly as follows: Do you think supporting the United States makes your country more vulnerable to attack? The worry is out there. Interestingly, no one is saying that supporting the United States will make your country *less* vulnerable to attack. This may be the product of a realistic sense among our allies as to what they have to contribute to defeating terrorism, namely, not much beyond domestic law enforcement and intelligence. But it is also indicative of a frame of mind that simply no longer exists in this country, namely, that perhaps a better response would be to do nothing, or to negotiate, or to appease, or to try to address those "root causes"—that these approaches, in the long run, would save more lives. Some of our allies have grown very accustomed to the security we provide them. In any case, Americans never seriously considered anything of the kind. Once again, this is a product of a sense of danger not just to Americans as individuals, but to the nation as a whole.

There has been, of course, some American dissent, from pockets of the far left and far right, but it is noteworthy mainly for its marginality—and for the speed with which other voices with substantial credibility in the political spheres in question have stepped up to dissent from the dissent. Writing in the January/February *Mother Jones*, Todd Gitlin, the New York University professor and veteran leftist activist and social critic, decried "a kind of left-wing fundamentalism, a negative faith in America the ugly." Addressing those who profess it, he asked, "What's offensive about affirming that you belong to a people, that your fate is bound up with theirs? Should it be surprising that suffering close-up is felt more urgently, more deeply, than suffering at a distance? After disaster comes a desire to reassemble the shards of a broken community, withstand the loss, strike back at the enemy. The attack stirs, in other words, patriotism—love of one's people, pride in their endurance, and a desire to keep them from being hurt anymore. . . . [I]t should not be hard to understand that the American flag sprouted in the days after September 11, for many of us, as a badge of belonging. . . ." On the right, one could cite similar denunciations of Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, who had described September 11 as divine retribution visited on a sinful country. The element common on left and right was the emphatic rejection of those unwilling to see Americans as a people, a nation, whose divisions on politics and other matters take place only within a broader unity.

There was a time when an American flag on a hard hat—think of the 1970 Peter Boyle movie *Joe*—was a cultural symbol of racism and oppression, the benighted exclusion of others from a common identity as a people. Those days are over. The flag on a hard hat today, or a police officer's or firefighter's uniform, is more likely to be taken as a mark of heroism.

Heroism is famously problematic in democratic societies, where egalitarian impulses as well as the bourgeois fear of violent death drastically circumscribe the desire to, for example, pursue glorious victory on the battlefield and conquer the world. In general, a hero is someone who has proved by his deeds his superiority to others, and this is obviously problematic for us. The usual solution is to define heroism down: hence, the figure of the heroic entrepreneur.

But I do think the vision of a genuinely democratic sort of hero became clear September 11 and after. This kind of heroism has been with us since the nation's beginnings, but it is perhaps easier to see given the volume of it to which we have lately been exposed.

Heroism, in a society such as ours, is risking your life to save a stranger's. This is the ultimate expression of egalitarianism, the conviction that human beings who may be very different in their particularity (rich or poor, black or white, native or foreign-born) share a common humanity—in the American context, as a people, a nation. The heroic aspect of the act is the assertion by deed that one does not value one's own life more highly than that of any other. These are the police and firefighters rushing to the scene, the hard hats searching for signs of life in treacherous debris, the passengers bringing the plane down now rather than clinging in hope and terror to a few more minutes of life at the cost of the lives of others.

And, of course, this quality stands as a corrective to the perspective of both victim and unvictim. Because this quality, finally, is the purest expression of the ties that bind this nation and its people—the sphere of a common public enterprise, not just an agglomeration of individual interests in pursuit of self-actualization. We may be fighting for, among other things, the right to pursue happiness. But while happiness is private and individual, right is a public matter. Sometimes a nation has to come together and fight. And while we are not all cut out for heroism, we know it when we see it, and nowadays, it is wearing red, white, and blue. ♦

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George W. Bush, Movie Star

A private screening of Alexandra Pelosi's forthcoming documentary

By Matt Labash

New York

It's Valentine's Day, and though I'm a married man, I'm standing on the sixth-floor landing of a Greenwich Village apartment building with a box of Russell Stover candy that's intended for a woman I've never met. I'm on a journalistic suck-up safari, and my quarry has warned me that I'd better not come empty-handed on such a hallowed day. (I almost brought a fruit basket, but it seemed so Connie Chung.)

My reportorial blind date is with former *Dateline* producer Alexandra Pelosi, the 31-year-old daughter of California Democratic congresswoman and minority whip Nancy Pelosi. Alexandra may be on the verge of cinematic stardom. After following George W. Bush on the campaign trail for a year and a half, she quit her NBC job, formed her own company (Purple Monkey Productions), and culled hundreds of hours of candid trail footage, shot on her autofocus Sony camcorder, much of it containing the future president of the United States monkeying around with reporters.

Her documentary is set to debut March 8 at the South by Southwest Film Festival in Austin, Texas. But it's already caused quite a stir. Relying on Pelosi friends who've seen it, *Time* magazine described scenes of Bush reverting to Deke-house form on the press plane: predicting that Pelosi's crush on another reporter would "result in a relationship that goes beyond hand-holding," bumping his way down the aisle while wearing a sleep mask, hoisting his non-alcoholic beer and pushing his way into a boozy press throng while declaring, "These are my people. It takes an animal to know an animal."

White House sources, understandably concerned that the president will look less than presidential, have begun sniping at Pelosi. They told both *Time* and the *Washington Post* that they were under the impression these sessions were off the record, a claim that taxes credulity since Bush is repeatedly filmed referring to her "documentary." He even went to the trouble of giving it a title—"Journeys With George"—which Pelosi ultimately used.

While Pelosi has shown portions of her film to several reporter friends, I aim to be the first to preview the final version in its entirety. Though she has so far rebuffed screening overtures by everyone from *USA Today* to the *Tonight Show* (first television dibs go to her old colleagues at *Dateline* and the *Today Show*), she mysteriously allows me to talk my way in, though not without making my life miserable first.

After numerous hours of set-up work on the phone in which the deal is nearly done, she turns difficult. "I don't want you to have it yet," she says. She makes me repeatedly assure her that I'm not out to do a hit piece. She tells me that at least a dozen of her friends have nixed me, suspecting a writer from a conservative political magazine could be up to no good with the daughter of one of Congress's most liberal Democrats. ("The *Weekly Standard*?" exclaimed her sister. "Get out of it!") When her advisers inform her that I once performed a knee-cap job on Rep. Patrick Kennedy, a personal friend of hers, she insists I call the story up on Nexis and read her all 3,500 words. "That's the meanest thing I've ever had read to me," she says.

It all seems a fairly clever ploy on her part: play a manic babe-in-the-woods (even though we're in the same profession), put the reporter on defense until you crush his will to play offense, ensure that he is so beholden to you for granting him access that he writes a nice story. As I knock on Pelosi's door, my integrity (such as it is) already compromised, she continues the hazing.

"Hold on," says the raspy voice from behind the door, "I've got to turn my camera on." As a precondition for viewing her documentary, I've agreed, in a fit of postmodernism, to be filmed

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myself after a brief getting-to-know-you session, from which she will decide if I seem like the trustworthy type. No journalism is supposed to be committed during this trial period, but as her door opens, camera whirring, I reflexively reach for my microrecorder in a Mexican standoff. "Whip it out," she commands. "I'll show you mine if you show me yours."

Unhappy that I, the hunter, have become the hunted, I ask her if she used that line on George Bush. ("Stop filming me, you're like a head cold," Bush barks at one point in the film.) She didn't, but easily could have. For Pelosi is a force of nature, a large presence, a disco inferno. In her bathroom hangs a giant, mirrored disco ball, hardly an oddity considering the rest of her apartment décor: the Reform School Girls movie postcard on her refrigerator, the purple velvet couch ("It's aubergine," she corrects), the campaign-rally photo of her in a University of Texas cheerleader outfit and rubber Bush mask, the Soviet-era propaganda artwork that lines the walls.

The director and the star: Alexandra Pelosi, armed with her camcorder

I compliment her digs, telling her that her apartment looks like a May Day parade at Studio 54. She rolls her eyes, then dictates what she assumes will be my lead, insinuating that she is a Greenwich Village pinko. Swiping my recorder, as she'll do freely throughout the afternoon whenever she wants to stress a point, she says, "Testing. Is this thing on? I AM NOT the vast left-wing conspiracy. Okay? Bill Kristol, are you listening?"

It's easy to see why the *New York Times*'s Frank Bruni—himself just out with a Bush campaign book, *Ambling Into History*—describes Pelosi as "the unrivaled queen of the pack when it came to self-amusement and consequences-be-damned diversion." While his descriptions of her read like harmless throwaway color (she'd pretend to be the campaign's cruise director, when not heading off to Kmart to buy "festive underwear"), Pelosi bristles at such characterizations, saying she was extremely dedicated to her work. In her year and a half as NBC's on-the-bus Bush shadow, she didn't make it back to her Manhattan apartment once. And since she didn't have the luxury of going home, she says she was forced to purchase Kmart's "Hello Kitty" underwear. "It's all they had," she says, genuinely peeved.

"The pack is very serious," says Pelosi. "But I'm a person, not a pack." She is so pleased with this line ("I love it, it's really working for me") that she has made it one of her six permanent talking points, which she allows me to read off a printout that sits next to the Mac computer where she and her editor Aaron Lubarsky cut her film. It rankles Pelosi that journalists are so grossly reductive. "It's what you journalists do," she says, before remembering that she is one. "We take the most extreme thing, and make it look like the norm."

For this reason, she has taken special care *not* to embarrass anyone in what many expect to be a mockumentary. Promising that her film is not a "Bush blooper reel" (another of her talking points), Pelosi is adamant about not discussing what she left on the cutting-room floor. "You wanna see the movie that no one in the movie has even seen," she scolds, "And now you have the balls to ask for outtakes? You're sick in the head."

Inside, Pelosi's apartment is a constant bustle of activity. The phone rings incessantly, a groveling procession of journalists. "What do they want?" I ask, protectively. "A piece, baby," she says. "After you bend me over in your article, I've got to get a publicist." The rest of the calls are from her coterie of family and friends, many of whom are making sure their girl isn't getting worked over by me.

It's a recurring theme all day. Even deciding where to eat sends her into existential crisis. We settle on her favorite neighborhood greasy spoon, Joe Jr.'s, since she fears if we go vegetarian I might portray her as one of "those crazy liberal chicks that can't find a man." I tire of all this journalism about journalism—it's starting to feel as though we're play-acting a Janet Malcolm essay. I ask her why she's so distrustful of journalists, considering she is one. "Because I know how much pain we cause," she says.

If publicists were advising Pelosi on how to optimize

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buzz, they would probably encourage her to cause more pain. What better way to attract attention and a deep-pockets distributor (which Pelosi still lacks) than spraying the leg of what many deem an unbearably respectable post-9/11 George Bush? But it's a fight she has no stomach for. "The truth is, in the end, I had a very nice relationship with [Bush], and that was the beauty of it. A girl who had been indoctrinated in the Democratic party, who'd been raised to believe Democrats were always right, actually developed a good relationship with this Republican son of a president whose father's positions my mom would go on the House floor and attack."

It may be her political lineage that explains her atypical respect for politicians. While Pelosi eschews serious policy debates ("there's not one moment of political substance in this movie"), she's not only the daughter of the House minority whip, but the granddaughter of a three-term mayor of Baltimore, Thomas D'Alesandro Jr. An old-school machine pol from Little Italy, he was every bit as colorful as Alexandra. According to Paul Taylor's book *See How They Run*, at one press conference, after a reporter asked a hostile question by saying his news desk wanted to know, D'Alesandro pressed his ear to his own desk, pretended a secret was being imparted, then announced, "My desk wants me to tell your desk to go f— itself."

In press notices, Pelosi's film has inevitably been twinned with Bruni's book. Each provides as vivid a picture of the at-ease towel-snapping merry-prankster Bush as has been drawn. But Bruni tends to assign Big Meaning to the smallest gesture or preference. Thus, Bush is a pop culture illiterate because he's unfamiliar with HBO's *Sex and the City*. The fact that Bush regularly ate peanut butter sandwiches revealed that "he preferred the old to the new, the tried to the untested." Perhaps so. But maybe he just liked peanut butter sandwiches. Pelosi seems much truer to Bush's own spirit. "He's a simple guy. He hates to be psychoanalyzed. So I didn't psychoanalyze him," Pelosi says. "I don't think it means you're not qualified to be leader of the free world because you don't watch *Sex and the City*."

By the time I have cleared all the requisite hurdles and we have talked for several hours, Pelosi is ready to let the movie speak for itself. She pops the tape in her VCR, then slinks off to her room, all of a sudden the shy artist. There's nothing to be shy about. She has delivered a tautly paced, visual *Boys on the Bus*.

Complementing her bemused voiceovers is a supporting cast of weary newspaper hacks who perfectly distill the absurdity of the never-ending campaign. It's all here: the go-to-hell gastronomic excesses (one female reporter eats seven donuts in a sitting), the folksy wisdom of the American people (a voter moons Bush's whistlestop train tour with gluteal graffiti reading "Raise Minimum Wage"), the random acts of senseless celebrity (in one post-debate spin room, Erin Brockovich shows up for no apparent reason, while the *Financial Times*'s Richard Wolffe sums up the scene as "a lot of really well paid people trying to convince a lot of other really well paid people that we know what's going on in ordinary people's minds").

But the main story is the playful jabbing between Pelosi and Bush. Bush adviser Mark McKinnon, the only member of Team Bush who has seen the film, and who loves it, says Pelosi was better than nearly anybody at drawing Bush out. "She didn't fit the typical profile of a Washington press corps member," he says. "She's purple, for one. [Pelosi often favors purple garb.] She's irreverent. She's the sort of person who's turned inside out—all the emotions are right there."

While everyone knows of Bush's penchant for dispensing nicknames like Pez candies, we have seen the real George W. only through a glass darkly—thanks to circumstantial necessity and his control-freak handlers. But Pelosi's full airing of his charm offensives is superior to previous accounts in the way eating chocolate is superior to reading about someone else eating it.

Hopelessly lowbrow, Bush is blessed with matchless comic timing. We see him posing as a chirpy male steward, welcoming reporters on the plane, then angrily snapping at them when they ask for peanuts. We see him reprising his male cheerleader days, pretzel-ing his body into letters to spell "Victory" after Super Tuesday. At one photo op, Pelosi accosts Karl Rove with her shaky hand-held camera. "Why are you lying?" she asks. "I'm not a journalist," Rove calmly replies. "I'm not a liar." Someone grabs the camera and turns the tables on Pelosi, prompting her to distance herself from other journalists by saying "I don't like these guys." "You don't like me?" Bush asks, incredulous, his head popping into the frame like a groundhog emerging from his hole, late to the party. "You call this objective journalism?"

A source of constant chiding was Pelosi's unrequited crush on *Newsweek*'s Trent Gegax. Bush, ever the gossipy girl, one day turns the camera on Pelosi after noticing her taking a walk with Gegax. "It's none of my business what your private life is like," he winds up, "But let me ask you this question, was that just a social encounter with *Newsweek* man?" Pelosi replies that she was merely discussing Bush's tax plan with a fellow member of the press corps. "And you felt like you had to hold his hand in order to amplify the discussion?" he presses. Before she can gather her wits, he moves in for the kill: "Is it true you believe a person of your stature can go one solid week without bathing?"

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For a year, Bush lugs Pelosi and company around the country, from a candlepin bowling meet-and-greet to a snowmobile photo op in New Hampshire. They often end up hating not only him for it, but themselves as well. "Mooooo," groans the *Dallas Morning News*'s Wayne Slater, as he is again herded like cattle. At a sub-freezing airport rally in Iowa, the *Houston Chronicle*'s R.G. Ratcliffe, who possesses a walrus mustache and a hangdog disposition, explains, "The only reason we're out here is in case Bush comes out, slips on the ice, and falls down. 'Cause we're vicious predators." From his airplane seat, Richard Wolffe once again nicely sums up the whole experience: "The great thing about this story is that we can pretend that it's somehow serious. Of course, it is serious. . . . But at the same time, most of our time is spent doing really stupid things, in stupid places with stupid people."

Through it all, Bush commands the stage in the back of the plane. He proudly models his western wear. He eats cheese doodles out of plastic airline cups. He lobbies Pelosi for her vote, telling her, "If I lose, you're out of work, you're off the plane, baby." When she asks why she shouldn't vote for someone who will protect the little guy, he earnestly declares, "I am the little guy. My brother's 6'3". Have you noticed that? I'm about 5'11"."

In an unexpectedly poignant moment on the plane, Bush tries to swim around Pelosi's queries as to what's changed since their odyssey started. He jokes that his daughters went off to college, that the Rangers are in last place, that his hair is turning gray. But she presses him for a serious answer. He cocks his head, joylessly holding his Buckler near-beer, and with a resigned sigh, unaware of what the next year will bring, he says, "Let's see, I started off as a cowboy. I'm now a statesman."

All told, *Journeys with George* lets George be George, or as George as he can be, considering that he was withstanding the constant scrutiny of hypercritical observers whose best days at the office came when Bush announced that he wanted to eliminate trade "bariffs and terriers."

Pelosi helpfully suggests that a good talking point for me regarding her movie would be to say that "it's better than *Apocalypse Now*." It's not. But among its finest moments—and the entire film is almost nothing but fine moments—is one that she simply narrates. Pelosi had conducted a super-secret margarita-fueled straw poll among reporters in the back of the plane about who they thought would win the election. Most predicted Al Gore. Somebody leaked the results to outside media. Embarrassed by the disclosure, and fearful that it would cost them access to Bush, most of the pack refused to come near Pelosi the next day. But in an act of kindness, Bush did. In Pelosi's telling, he said, "When they see me talking to you, they're gonna act like they're your friends again. But these people aren't your friends. They can say what they want about me. But at least I know who I am, and I know who my friends are." ♦

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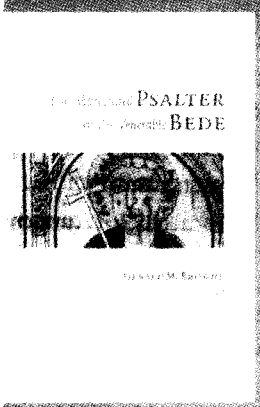

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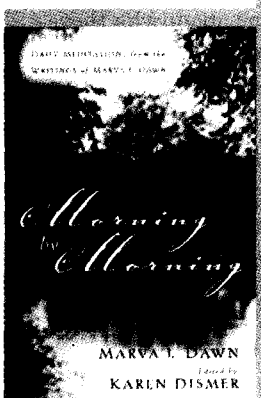

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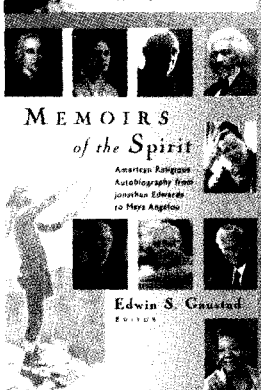

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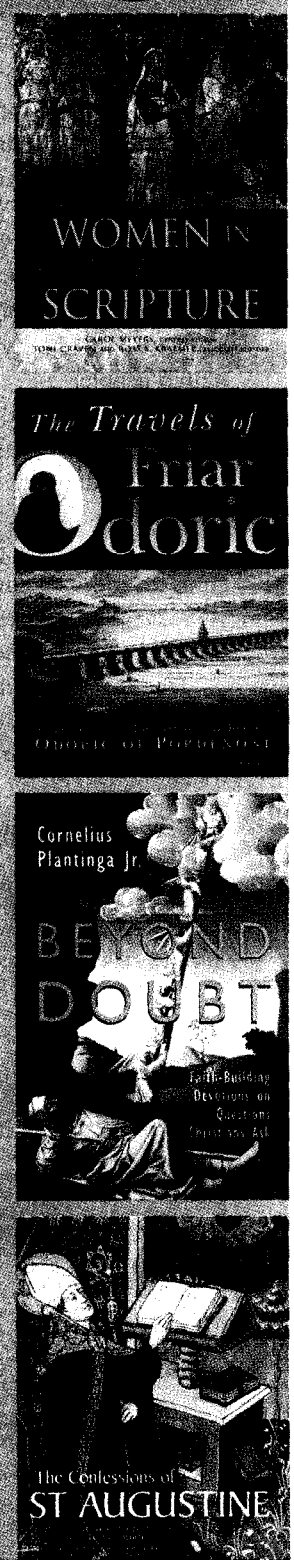

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Why We Don't Spy

The Failure of the American Intelligence Community

By Claire Berlinski

According to CIA case officer Robert Baer, who spent twenty-one years recruiting informants in the Middle East and Central Asia, the luminaries of the CIA hold that the events of September 11 are no grounds for self-reproach. In the preface to his outraged memoir, *See No Evil: The True Story of a Ground Soldier in the CIA's War on Terrorism*, Baer reports that high-ranking CIA officials privately tell reporters that "when the dust finally clears, Americans will see that September 11 was a triumph for the intelligence community, not a failure."

See No Evil
The True Story of a Ground Soldier in the CIA's War on Terrorism
by Robert Baer
Crown, 288 pp., $25.95

Cloak and Dollar
A History of American Secret Intelligence
by Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones
Yale University Press, 384 pp., $29.95

It is a challenge to imagine what the words "intelligence failure" might mean, if not an unexpected attack on American soil that leaves more than three thousand civilians dead. Perhaps these officials are keeping the term in reserve for an invasion by extraterrestrials. And thus Baer replies: "If that's going to be the official line of thinking at the agency charged with manning the front lines in the war against the Osama bin Ladens of this world, then I am more than angry: I am scared to death."

Only months after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet is still in place, his power and prestige, if anything, augmented. The CIA's Counter-Terrorism Center staff has doubled in size, its budget enlarged by hundreds of millions of dollars. No one from the center has been asked to resign or retire. Indeed, no one at the CIA has been called to account in any way. "Absolutely not," says CIA spokesman Bill Harlow. "We'll give them medals."

Many observers—including the president of the United States, who within days of the attacks visited headquarters to clap the affable CIA director on his leather-clad back—have made the case that the CIA cannot be held responsible for its failure to predict the outrages. After all, they argue, the world is a very big place. One cannot know everything, all the time. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the CIA's budgets were cut. The CIA has been fighting with one hand tied behind its back, apologists say, hamstrung by the constraints of the Church and Pike committees, forbidden to assassinate miscreants, enjoined from recruiting the very assets needed in the war against terrorism—human rights violators, to be precise. There is no use pointing fingers, defenders argue; it will only make everyone concerned feel *bad* about themselves.

Baer is of another mind. The attacks of September 11, he argues, might have been predicted and preempted through an aggressive intelligence program. Through negligence, failure of imagination, bureaucratic infighting, careerism, and political correctness, the CIA consumed itself in pettiness after the Cold War, missing thousands of warnings, failing to capitalize upon opportunity after opportunity to penetrate terrorist organizations, refusing to dirty its hands with the messy and risky business of collecting human intelligence, systematically purging the very assets who might have warned of the impending disaster, and driving from its ranks its most aggressive and talented case officers. Baer writes:

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Claire Berlinski is a freelance writer who lives in Paris. Her novel about the Central Intelligence Agency, Loose Lips, *will be published next year by Random House.*

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> Americans need to know that what happened to the CIA didn't happen just by chance. . . . At a time when terrorist threats were compounding globally, the agency that should have been monitoring them was scrubbed clean instead. Americans were making too much money to bother. Life was good. The oceans on either side of us were all the protection we needed. . . . Defanged and dispirited, the CIA went along for the ride. And then on September 11, 2001, the reckoning for such vast carelessness was presented for all the world to see.

In the early 1990s, Baer, who reads and speaks Arabic, noted an unusual efflorescence of radical Islamic tracts in the bookstores of Central London. These pamphlets, written in Arabic, openly advocated violence against the United States—and were, in fact, so inflammatory as to be banned even in most Middle Eastern countries. "One glance at the bold print," writes Baer, "and you knew what they were about: a deep, uncompromising hatred of the United States. In the worldview of the people who wrote these tracts, a jihad, or holy war, between Islam and America wasn't just a possibility; for them the war was a given, and it was already underway." What was the CIA doing, then, to monitor the authors and publishers of these tracts? According to Baer, it was doing nothing whatsoever. Why not? For one thing, not a single CIA officer in Britain spoke or read Arabic. Moreover, the CIA feared the British would be annoyed were its officers to recruit sources—even Islamic fundamentalists—on British soil.

At the same time, CIA offices in Bonn, Paris, and Rome were shrivelling. In the decade before the attacks, Baer reports, the CIA had no agents in the mosques of Germany who could have informed them of the increasing radicalization of European Moslems or Mohamed Atta's efforts to recruit young terrorists for his obscene plot. In the Middle East itself, things were not much better; many countries were staffed in their entirety by only one or two CIA officers; more often than not, these officers could speak no Arabic, nor any other language spoken by Islamic extremists.

In the wake of the Aldrich Ames scandal, the agency turned instead upon itself. Offenses as trivial as bouncing a check served to end careers. Many of the agency's best trained and most experienced officers were impounded at CIA Headquarters for years, their lives under microscopic examination, while terrorists operated throughout Europe and the Middle East free from scrutiny.

In late 1994, Baer was the only CIA officer serving in Tajikistan. There, he recruited a Russian nationalist he calls Grigor, a full colonel in the Russian army and the commander of an elite army regiment. Grigor informed Baer—and thus Washington—of a generals' plot to stage a coup against Boris Yeltsin. Clearly Grigor was an intelligence source of rare merit. The colonel attempted energetically to warn the CIA of the dangers of emerging Islamic fundamentalism on the outskirts of the Soviet empire, but when Baer left Tajikistan at the end of his tour, the CIA could find not a single qualified officer willing to replace him. One candidate was instead sent to a mid-career management training course; another rejected the assignment on the grounds that Dushanbe "wasn't a good career move." Ultimately, the CIA replaced Baer with a paramilitary officer who spoke neither Russian or Tajik, had never recruited nor handled an agent, and could not communicate with Grigor, who spoke no English. "The CIA had no agents in the Russian military and apparently didn't care . . . despite the fact that it still possessed missiles that could deliver a nuclear warhead to anywhere it wanted in the U.S.," notes Baer, who finds the agency's indifference to the Russian missile program unfathomable.

Where are the investigations? Where are the congressional hearings, the calls to action, the outraged editorials?

During this time, Baer begged for an interpreter to interview the flood of refugees streaming into Tajikistan over the Afghan border. Baer hoped to debrief these refugees, recruit them, and send them back into Afghanistan to report on the increasingly volatile civil war and the growing influence of foreign Islamic radicals in the Afghan outback. His pleas were unmet. He was told the agency had no speakers of Dari or Pashtun. Headquarters offered to send him a four-person sexual harassment briefing team instead. Members of the House and Senate intelligence committees, please pay attention here. The people who made this decision are still in charge of our intelligence efforts. Can any American repose his confidence in the managers who exercised such catastrophically poor judgment?

In 1995, Baer and a group of Iraqi dissidents led by Ahmed Chalabi, chairman of the Iraqi National Congress, worked together to plan an assault on the Iraqi army. Moments before the plan was to be effected, the Clinton administration, seized by an attack of the vapors, changed its mind. The NSC ordered Baer to tell Chalabi that the United States was withdrawing its support. The move split the two Kurdish groups backing Chalabi in two, and led to a massacre of INC soldiers by Iraqi forces the following year. Baer argues that this was the United States' last chance to rid itself of Hussein without using its own troops. Again, he concludes, we are now paying the price for nerve misplaced and opportunities lost.

A memoir is a memoir, of course, and like all memoirs, this one gives rise to the obvious question: Is it true? Or is this the creative fiction of a disgruntled former employee, a record distorted out of spite? There is no way independently to confirm Baer's claims. The CIA certainly isn't talking, although the agency's Publication

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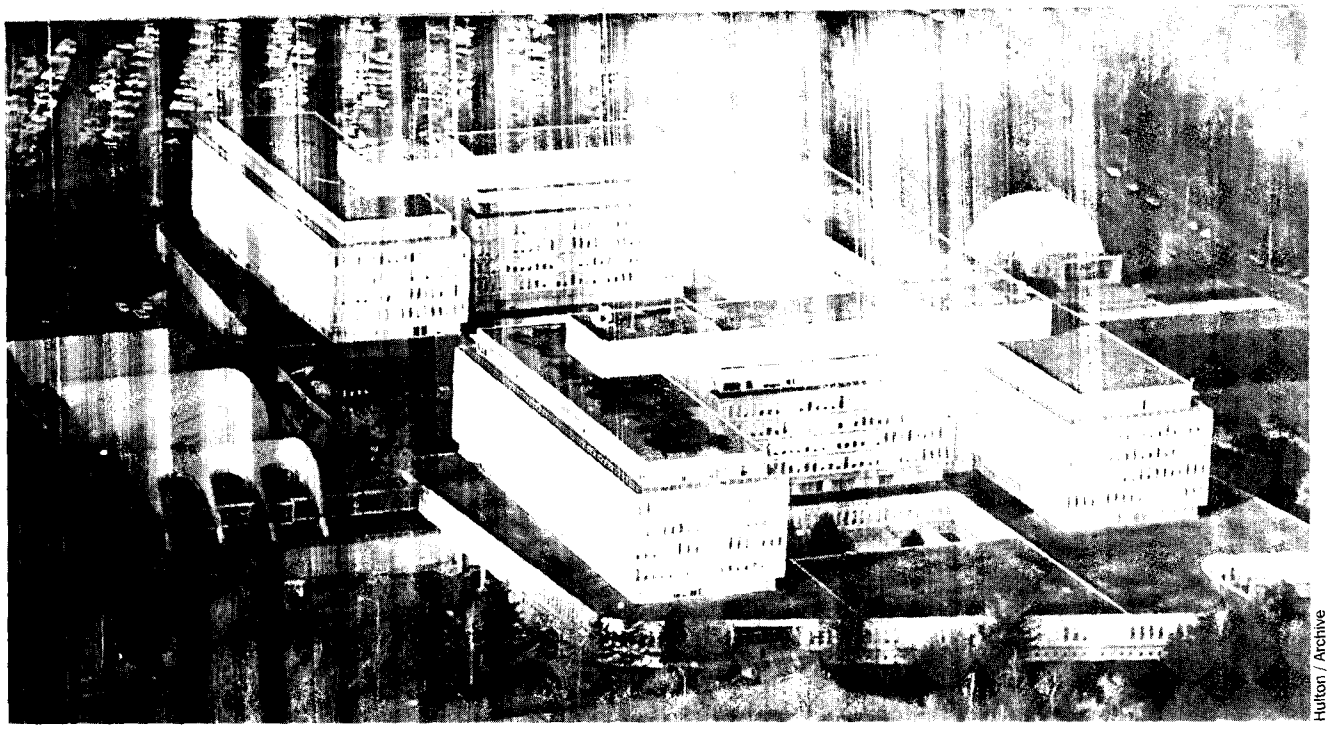

Hulton / Archive

The CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, 1973

Review Board did seize the computer on which the unpublished manuscript resided, and forced Baer to delete a full third of the book—something they would be unlikely to do if the contents were patently false. But it is worth noting that Baer is part of an emerging cohort of disillusioned case officers, among them, for example, the prescient Reuel Gerecht (a frequent WEEKLY STANDARD contributor), who wrote in a now-famous *Atlantic Monthly* article that "America's counterterrorism program in the Middle East and its environs is a myth." Gerecht's perspective corroborates Baer's in substance and detail: "In my years inside the CIA," Gerecht writes, "I never once heard case officers overseas or back at headquarters discuss the ABCs of a recruitment operation against any Middle Eastern target that took a case officer far off the diplomatic and business-conference circuits. Long-term seeding operations simply didn't occur."

The arguments made by Baer and Gerecht are supported by many other officers who decline to make their views public. They argue that a risk-averse, bureaucratized CIA was unable to predict the events of September 11 because it did not have enough linguistically trained case officers in the field, refused to develop cadres of specialists to focus on particular countries or terrorist groups, and had no interest in any operation that could lead to a flap or embarrassment. Stories like Baer's are multiplying rapidly, and they are disturbingly alike. If Baer's book is even partially true, the CIA's management must be called to account.

But where are the investigations? Where are the congressional hearings, the calls to action, the outraged editorials in the *New York Times*? After Pearl Harbor, Americans demanded Admiral Kimmel's head on a platter; indeed, the CIA was created *with the express intention* that never again should American policymakers be similarly caught unawares. Shortly following the September 11 attacks, there were hints of a reckoning to come: Senator Richard Shelby, for example, the vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, publicly questioned the director's competence, saying the job was "getting away from him." But oddly, the inquiries stopped there. Since then, no fresh investigation has been proposed: Representative Tim Roemer, who serves on the new House Subcommittee on Terrorism and Homeland Security, suggested the CIA be subject to an external review, but stressed that the purpose would be "not to blame individuals." Heaven forbid someone should be blamed. He might feel bad about himself.

How has the CIA escaped scrutiny? Enron and its hapless managers have received far more attention from Congress. Baer blames the crisis on "politics" and takes his analysis no further. But that is not enough. Where Baer leaves off, intelligence historian Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones begins. *Cloak and Dollar* is an account of the history of American intelligence efforts from the 1790s to the present. From its inception, Jeffreys-Jones argues, when George Washington set aside a discretionary fund for covert operations, the U.S. intelligence community has excelled above all at one overarching psychological mission: convincing policymakers in Washington to expand its budgets and purview. "There has been," writes Jeffreys-Jones, "a long-standing conspiracy of spies, a great confidence trick designed to boost the fortunes of the spy rather than protect the security of the American people." And while the book is a history, recent events are clearly emblematic.

Jeffreys-Jones commences with a discussion of George Washington's restrained, efficient intelligence collection, and compares it to the increasingly commercial, bureaucratic, and populist style of subsequent spymasters. Since the Civil War, and particularly since the 1950s, Jeffreys-Jones argues, American citizens have been importuned by American spies to alarm themselves with various contrived threats—Confederate assassination plots, Western land fraud, Chinese espionage, cocaine scares, digital encryption, and the like. These hysterias, argues Jeffreys-Jones, while little rele-

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vant to the protection of American soil, each time enlarged the spymasters' power and prestige. Jeffreys-Jones discusses the "expansionist nature of espionage" in the context of a growing federal government, with its commensurate opportunities for clandestine employment, and the political tendency to devise and fund programs with popular appeal. Like all bureaucracies—and precisely as Max Weber would have predicted—the espionage machine seeks continually to enlarge itself. Unlike other bureaucracies, it cloaks its activities in a robe of dazzle, mystery, and flimflam: Its masters deflect criticism by sleight of hand, appeals to patriotism, and lavish applications of oily, insiderish charm. When questioned, they reply that the constraints of secrecy prevent them from mounting a vigorous public defense of their budgets and actions. They shrug charmingly.

In 1870 the Department of Justice established an investigative force with the objective of avoiding intelligence duplication and waste. Since then, Jeffreys-Jones notes, this argument for economy has been deployed again and again to justify the increasing complexity of the U.S. intelligence effort: Both the CIA and Defense Intelligence Agency were proposed as advancements in economy, but in fact "added layers of bureaucracy costing more money, as well as adding to the undigested information mountain." Moreover, notes Jeffreys-Jones, "another bizarre and oft-repeated practice has been the reward of failure. A disaster happens; the government sets up a preemptive inquiry to deliberate until the fuss dies down; the confidence men now say the disaster happened because they had too little money to spend on intelligence; the president and Congress authorize more intelligence funds. Thus, for example, Pearl Harbor spawned the OSS and the CIA, and the National Security Agency's shortcomings in the 1990s inspired not punitive cuts but larger appropriations."

Does any of this sound familiar?

Jeffreys-Jones's account is not simply an indictment or a criticism, although it is both. It is a meticulously documented piece of scholarship, based on new archival research. It is unique in the scope of its inquiry. His is the only published account, for example, of the history of U-1, the elite and superefficient World War I era spy agency that demolished the American espionage ring led by German intelligence chief Colonel Walter Nicolai. Jeffreys-Jones compares U-1 favorably with its successor, the CIA, noting that while U-1's milieu may have been "undemocratic and even incestuous," its operations were "harmonious and watertight." The small and streamlined service was "not too large, so it was less likely that vital details would be lost in a morass of bureaucracy." Moreover, "U-1 did not present the opportunities for buck-passing and evasion of responsibility that tend to exist in a larger organization."

Disappointingly, Jeffreys-Jones spends only two pages placing the attacks of September 11 in the broader context of the history of American intelligence, no doubt because the manuscript was completed beforehand and rushed thereafter into print. His afterthought, however, is apt: In the wake of the attacks, he observes, "encrusted in tradition were the immediate appeals for a boost to the intelligence community, accompanied by ill-founded complaints that it had been financially squeezed since the end of the Cold War. The situation was custom made for the intelligence confidence man and his political allies. Once again, the cries were heard: Give them more money, unleash the CIA. Once again, it was tempting to resort to expensive, static, and home-based solutions."

In light of Jeffreys-Jones's observations, the CIA director's voodoo grip on the intelligence committees and the White House can be seen in its broader historical context. Perhaps it is not much of a surprise. But apologists, beware: After the next catastrophic attack on the United States—this time, perhaps, with nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons—the untouchable director, with his snake charmer's gaze, may be the only thing that survives. ♦

Popular Democracy?

The virtues and the vices of the initiative process.

BY JOHN J. PITNEY JR.

Tevye, the conflicted main character of *Fiddler on the Roof*, pondered tough choices by arguing with himself, starting each new line of thought with the phrase, "On the other hand . . . "

Democratic Delusions
The Initiative Process in America
by Richard J. Ellis
University Press of Kansas,
240 pp., $17.95 paper

For conservatives, the initiative process is a Tevye issue. Two dozen states and many localities have some version of the initiative, which enables citizens to make law by popular vote. Conservatives have scored important political triumphs this way. Proposition 13, a 1978 ballot measure that cut property taxes in California, revealed the political potency of the tax issue and helped shape the Reagan presidential campaign two years later. More recent initiatives have rolled back racial preferences and stopped harmful programs that kept immigrant children from learning English.

On the other hand, conservatives revere James Madison, who warned that direct or "pure" democracy "can admit of no cure for the mischiefs of

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faction." Acting through direct popular vote, unchecked majorities can roll over minorities. The careful, deliberative work of legislation simply cannot take place among a large mass of citizens, even when they are all wise and intelligent. "Had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates," Madison wrote, "every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob."

One may find ample justification for such misgivings in *Democratic Delusions*, by Richard J. Ellis, a professor of politics at Willamette University. He starts with the example of Measure 58, a 1998 Oregon ballot initiative to let adoptees see their birth certificates. He admires the idealism of the initiative's author but questions whether the voters knew what they were doing. "The initiative was a species of tyranny of the majority, with a large but unaffected public that adversely affected a tiny minority of birth mothers."

Ellis ably sketches the evolution of the initiative process from its origins in the late 1800s. Though we tend to associate it with clean-fingernails reformism, he notes that its earliest proponents were hard leftists who thought it would transform American society. "Direct legislation began as the handmaiden of economic radicalism." Thanks to support from more moderate elements, who depicted it merely as a check on the legislatures, it spread to nineteen states by 1918. Very early, though, the process started to show most of the defects that critics attack today: confusing ballots, confused voters, misleading titles, and most of all, the influence of organized groups that manipulate it for selfish gain.

Ellis does a fine job of explaining the unanticipated consequences of ballot access rules. To get a measure on any state ballot, proponents must gather a certain number of signatures. The original goal was sensible: to screen out initiatives lacking even a minimal level of public support. In practice, these requirements have given rise to initiative-qualification firms, who use paid workers to collect the signatures. Whereas volunteer gatherers care about their issue and are willing to explain it to potential signers, professionals only want ink on paper. Ellis quotes a handbook that tells paid gatherers not to "converse at length with signers or attempt to answer lengthy questions. . . . The goal of the table operation is to get petition signatures, not educate voters." In the initiative business, the practical approach trumps the deliberative one. Ellis provides Oregon data showing that initiatives with paid gatherers are much more likely to make the ballot than volunteer efforts.

Unfortunately, Ellis takes some gratuitous swipes at conservative positions. Though faulting the Florida Supreme Court for blocking Ward Connerly's proposed measures against racial preferences, he adds: "Was Florida better off without Connerly's four sweeping initiatives? Almost certainly." Nevertheless, his focus is on process instead of ideology, and conservatives could accept much of what he says.

On the other hand, while Ellis offers a wealth of shrewd insights into the shortcomings of the initiative, he has little to say about the alternative, namely the regular workings of the state legislatures. His few observations on the topic are debatable. Initiative activists may talk a populist game, he says, but legislators actually have to face the people. "When voters no longer like what a politician is doing, they can vote them out of office. Elections hold politicians accountable for their words and deeds."

The reality is quite different in many places, especially California. The only way an average state legislator can appear on Los Angeles television is to get into a freeway car chase. With the media paying scant attention to state politics, voters know little about their lawmakers' words, deeds, or even identities. What is more, the recent redistricting has effectively abolished interparty competition in state legislative elections. With most of the districts having strong Democratic margins, and the small remainder having strong Republican margins, few seats will

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change hands in the next decade. Just about the only competition will come in party primaries for open seats. Ironically, there will be so many open seats only because of term limits, a product of the initiative process.

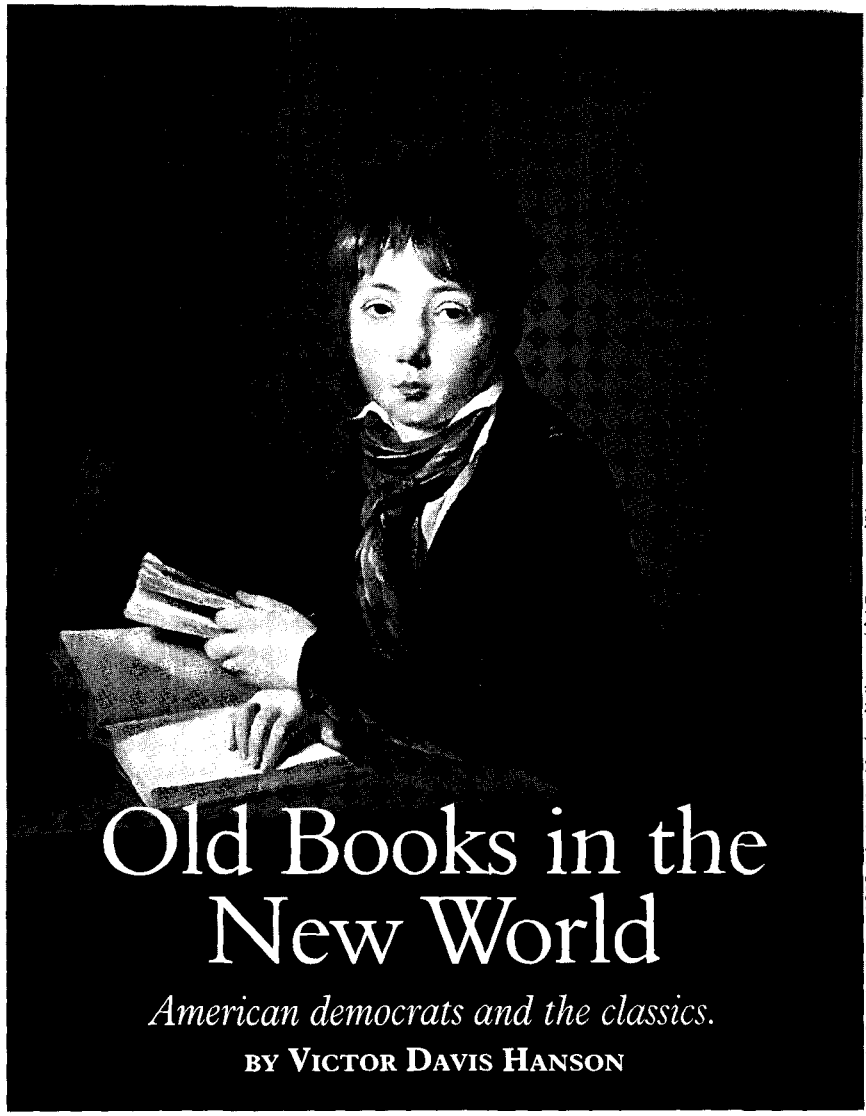
Compared with the initiative, Ellis says, the regular legislative process is better at correcting and learning from errors. There is merit to his argument, but he overlooks the tendency of politicians to back their own bets. To create a policy or program is to create a constituency for its preservation and expansion. Politicians are loath to anger constituencies that they themselves have begotten, and so the government grows.

During the 1980s, state and local spending (minus federal aid) averaged 8.8 percent of gross domestic product. During the 1990s, it averaged 9.7 percent—a huge increase in a multitrillion dollar economy. Some would claim that it all went to good causes, but a skeptical conservative might wonder whether state legislators were merely papering over their mistakes with wads of cash. Maybe the initiative is a worthwhile alternative after all.

On the other hand, conservatives make a big mistake if they assume that direct democracy automatically produces more favorable results than representative democracy. The electorate giveth, and the electorate taketh away. A decade after Proposition 13, California voters enacted Proposition 98, a union-backed amendment to the state constitution, which guarantees the educational establishment about 40 percent of state revenues.

In California and other states, the unions have also vanquished school choice, a top priority of many conservatives. Oregon voters in 1994 narrowly passed a law legalizing physician-assisted suicide, and three years later beat back a measure to repeal it. The Justice Department is now seeking to thwart the Oregon law.

Although these examples do not rule out conservative support for the initiative process, they do suggest the need for caution. We should approach the issue with both eyes open—and both hands ready. ♦



A portrait of a schoolboy, c. 1808. Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY.

Old Books in the New World

American democrats and the classics.

BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

I used to leave graduate classes in Latin and Greek composition at Stanford on Fridays to drive home to the San Joaquin Valley to help on our grape farm over the weekend. Neither of these antithetical worlds knew anything about the other. But the curious thing is this: People in rural California, given the chance, would have welcomed general knowledge about the classical foundations of their own American institutions, as well as information about the glory of Greece and grandeur of Rome. Yet very few classics professors—who spent hours teaching us how to complete hexameters in Latin and create purpose clauses with the genitive case of articular infinitives in Greek—had much of a clue about how to teach anybody anything like that.

The Culture of Classicism
Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780-1910
by Caroline Winterer
Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 272 pp., $45

Classics, the formal study of the languages, literatures, and culture of ancient Greece and Rome, has always held an odd position in American life. As Caroline Winterer shows in her elegant book *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780-1910*, those professors who tried to teach the citizenry at large about how the Greeks and Romans created and struggled with democracy and republican government enjoyed little support—and often downright hostility—from both the public and universities.

At the very founding of our own nation, modernists in other disciplines—backed by the likes of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, and Benjamin Rush—claimed that knowl-

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edge of the classical languages was an empty aristocratic pursuit. Greek and Latin were better left to a few class-bound New England dandies or southern plantationists who aped, rather than properly rejected, Europe's leisured gentry. These pragmatists felt such esoteric studies had no relevance to the new emerging muscular classes in our factories and farms and on the frontier. We had left Europe to build something new—and better—in America, and our citizens needed vocational skills and rudimentary literacy, not declensions and conjugations. Later nineteenth century academics such as Stanford's David Starr Jordan joined with such figures as Andrew Carnegie and Charles Francis Adams to remind Americans that universities were not "cloisters," but "workshops" where "reality and practicality" ruled.

Meanwhile, within the discipline of classics itself, purists—under the influence of the great philologists, epigraphers, and historians of Germany and England—were also rejecting popular relevance. Bent on establishing classics as a truly scientific discipline akin to math or biology, they declared that only years of careful and narrow study of esoteric texts, Greek inscriptions, and archaeological finds—published in little-read journals and obscure doctoral dissertations—could ensure that classics was a legitimate field in a modern world. Only a brutal regimen of philologically based doctoral study—open to those of all classes and backgrounds—could ensure legitimacy for classics.

The new meritocratic guardians of language who emerged with Ph.D.s in the mid-nineteenth century could then certify and audit those with pretenses to knowledge about everything from Homer to gladiators. And perhaps the seemingly irrelevant pieces of their esoteric publications might someday magically all fit together in one coherent mosaic of the ancient world—one that would justify their decades of painstaking and misunderstood research. Or so they thought.

A few brilliant classicists withstood both these extremes—and for a brief period they succeeded in leaving the imprint of cultured classical erudition upon the general society. It was a heady time for classics between 1860 and 1920. Even newly created pillars of scientific classicism like the American Philological Society, the Archaeological Institute of America, and the American School of Classical Studies—unlike their stuffy European counterparts—reflected larger efforts to teach the public and undergraduates alike about Greece and Rome.

Men like Charles Eliot Norton and Basil L. Gildersleeve—along with the antimodernist Paul Shorey—used their learning to argue for the dissemination of high classical culture to the masses, as if there were no inconsistency in establishing Germanic-based doctoral programs in classical languages to help the spread of Latin in the high schools. In *The Culture of Classicism* Winterer correctly points out that many of the greatest achievements of American culture at large—neoclassical architecture, rich allusions and precision in the American literature of Pound, Eliot, and O'Neill, and the presence of Western civilization courses and general humanities classes in the college curriculum—were attributable to this unique generation of scholarly "popularizers," who battled the realists and vocationalists outside classics and the idle snobs and pedantic specialists inside.

As late as 1915, only English, algebra, and history had larger enrollments than Latin in high schools. Those Americans who graduated did so with a solid sense of language, literature, civics, and ethics. Millions of working class Americans were to be as literate and knowledgeable of the basics of a humane and consensual society as had been privileged Roman aristocrats of old.

But this renaissance of knowledge was short lived. Successors to the nineteenth century generalists could not—or would not—reconcile the basic inconsistencies of a field whose rigorous linguistic, historical, and literary prerequisites were at odds with the egalitarian spirit of twentieth century education for the masses. To spread classical learning, tens of thousands had to learn Greek and Latin. But both languages are time consuming, difficult, and bound up in class traditions. It seemed hard to insist to an immigrant from Italy, Poland, or Mexico that spending two years learning Latin and Greek would make him a better citizen or wealthier—much less a gentleman or a national asset as a much-needed expert on the textual history of Petronius. Such esoteric learning was more attuned, as Harvard president Charles Eliot warned, to the seventeenth than to the nineteenth century.

Hand in glove throughout the twentieth century, popular culture and academic specialization killed off classics. Already by the early 1920s social sciences—psychology, sociology, anthropology—had crowded out classics, aided by both vocationalism (nursing, teacher training, physical education) and the new academic professionalism of business, law, and medicine. Only a fraction of today's university population takes Greek and Latin, compared to the students a century ago—although the general student body is twenty times larger than in 1900. Greek is nearly dead—taught, for example, only haphazardly each semester to fewer than a hundred undergraduates in the California State University system, the world's largest university, with over 250,000 students on twenty-two campuses. And nationwide fewer than six hundred out of one million bachelor's degrees are awarded in classics each year.

How, after all, can you argue for two years of Greek to a student facing thousands of dollars in loans, when he can better support his future family through a semester of accounting? Why take Latin for law school when psychology purportedly offers a better understanding of jury selection? So the old modernist versus traditionalist argument of the nineteenth century about the proper role of classics was long ago won by the realists. On the right, the winners were vocationalists who sought to use the university to train working class youth in mar-

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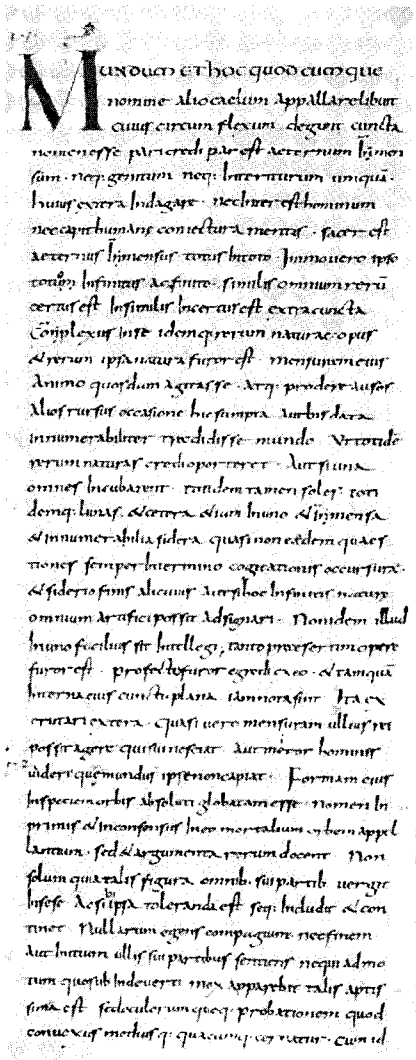
ketable skills; on the left, the winners were social scientists like John Dewey who felt that their new disciplines were more relevant to the reform of society at large. But as it turned out, students were to be taught a lot more about a lot less—and almost nothing about everything from literature to history to philosophy that had been the old stuff of classics.

In despair, as enrollment plummeted and the nation's art, architecture, and literature were severed from their Greco-Roman roots, philologists fled modernism and retreated into further esoterica—more dissertations on the use of *gar* in Pindar's *Odes* or the 175th new and ingenious interpretation of how triremes were rowed. The doctors grew smug rather than worried that they had kept up philological standards as their culture yawned and passed them by. Like every besieged and shrinking sect, classicists found proof of true belief was found in greater specialization, as if mastery of every particle in Greek could prove one had not joined the infidels.

There have been rallies in recent years, but mostly by those who lacked both the brilliance and public spiritedness of their nineteenth century predecessors. In the 1980s and 1990s, in a bizarre twist, some revisionist classicists schooled in the 1960s thought that they could retain the snobbery and specialization of the old purists and yet still enjoy the relevance of the modernists. Precious professors with long titles and reduced teaching loads would now "do theory" instead of Greek grammar, and thereby teach our new "diverse" student body the neglected "multicultural" world of the ancient Mediterranean and its vibrant population of "the Other." For the last two decades or so, undergraduates got "the rhetoric of manhood" in Homer, rather than enjambed hexameters. But it all mattered little. These new specialists—with a new trendy message and the old tired values—failed as miserably as their stuffy mentors.

Where, then, does classics stand today and does it matter any longer? Mostly the teaching of Latin and



A manuscript of Pliny's *Historia Naturalis*. The Pierpont Morgan Library / Art Resource, NY.

Greek, and satellite classes in history, literature, and archaeology, are kept alive by a cadre of a few hundred devoted and mostly exhausted undergraduate teachers who follow the spirit of Norton and Gildersleeve at a wide range of colleges from St. John's, Santa Clara, and Amherst to Vermont, Iowa State, and San Diego State. But unlike the greatest generation of classicists who created the pillars of our field, our scholar-teachers are mostly ignored by specialists who run the major research institutions and graduate classics departments. In contrast, these distant grandees of the tiny field teach less than ever before and are unknown to the citizenry at large. Whether they be the old fogies (who, it must be admitted, really do know Greek) or the new politically engaged (who do not), few students take their classes, and no one else reads what they write.

This is all a pity, really. Even a year of Latin for our nation's youth would do far more to inculcate grammar, style, and precision in written expression than all the current trendy variations of English composition classes. Immigrants especially would find Virgil or Livy a far better catalyst to success than a decade of bilingual education. Students with a firm grasp of Homer, Plato, Thucydides, and Cicero, if only in translation, would have understood the beauty and contradictions of Western civilization—and have gained a sense of who they are and what their culture is about.

In the days since September 11, my own classics students have cited Plato's "Peace is only a parenthesis," and Heraclitus' "War is the father of all things." Meanwhile, Ph.D.s in counseling and sociology have been holding rallies to decry this apparently inexplicably barbarous lapse of education and maturity on the part of the United States in its decision to go to war. Classics seems to have the strange effect of making its twenty-year-old students wise beyond their years.

Indeed, we didn't fail to foresee the attacks from the Middle East because too few Americans are acquainted with peace studies, multiculturalism, and various therapeutic theories that emanate daily from the university. Rather, our puzzlement at someone who hates us so in 2002 arises from our knowing so little of the unchanging nature of man and politics. An hour with Thucydides—whether reading of the great debate at Sparta, the stasis at Corcyra, the Melian Dialogue, or the argument over going to Syracuse—might have warned us that people attack others over their "fear, honor, and self-interest." Caroline Winterer leaves unanswered the question of whether classics will ever again fulfill the vision of Norton and Gildersleeve. Probably not. But it is possible in these days that the beauty and the wisdom contained in Greek and Latin will again inspire a democratic public. ♦

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Bewitched at the Bookstore

Seven books on witchcraft were published in the first two weeks of January 2002. That's up from five *a year* as recently as the 1980s, and fewer than one a year in the first half of the twentieth century. Interest in the contemporary pagan mishmash known as Wicca is clearly booming.

"How-to" books are flying off the shelves, and fiction with Wicca themes is also beginning to surface. Last year—no doubt influenced by the success of the *Harry Potter* books—three major houses launched serials for teenagers: the *Sweep* series by Cate Tiernan from Penguin Putnam; *Circle of Three* by Isobel Bird from Avon; and *Daughters of the Moon* by Lynne Ewing from an imprint of Hyperion. Scholastic Books, a publisher once associated with wholesome children's books—remember Encyclopedia Brown and the Mad Scientists' Club?—has seen to it that the 8- to 12-year-old set is not left out: Scholastic has a new series, called *Twitches*, by H.B. Gilmour and Randi Reisfeld, tailored to preteens.

Several houses are supplementing their books with "spell kits." The New Age publisher Llewellyn released a *Teen Witch Kit* in the summer of 2000 by Wiccan author Silver RavenWolf, complete with crystal, pentacle necklace, spell book, spell salt, and pop-up altar. *Publisher's Weekly* reported that 24,000 of the kits had sold by spring 2001—at $24.95 a pop-up.

"Wicca," explains Wiccan Phyllis Currott, "is an amalgamation of Freemasonry, mythology, folk practices, nineteenth-century American pantheism, transcendentalism, feminism, Spiritualism, Buddhism, ancient goddesses, and shamanism." Some adherents revel in the moniker "witch," while others prefer the term "Wiccan" as less loaded.

"We saw a 20 percent increase in sales in our Wicca books last year," says Ann Binkley, a spokeswoman for Border's Books. At Barnes & Noble last year, sales of Wicca books grew particularly among teenagers, a spokeswoman reports—so much so that the chain's publishing arm released its own Wicca titles, including *A Girl's Guide to Spells: Making Magic Happen In Your Life*. "Over the past three years Wicca has become more popular. The Internet has played a large role in that," says a representative for Barnes & Noble. "The buyer in that division has a pulse of what is going on in the culture and decides what to publish. Wicca is a steady category for us."

It was not always thus. Ten years ago, books about Wicca were mostly confined to small New Age and occult shops. Some of those old-style venues survive. In Asheville, North Carolina, a store called "Elder Moon" is seeing record sales of Gerald Gardner's seminal works *Witchcraft Today* and *The Meaning of Witchcraft*. "East West," a bookstore in Sacramento, California, sells only religious titles—and its owner, Garrett Stanley, says that Wicca has now reached fifth place in sales, behind Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Native American Spirituality.

There is no question that Wicca makes money for publishers. ECW, a Canadian publishing house that got its start with academic essays ("ECW" stands for "Essays on Canadian Writing"), leapt into the Wicca market last year with *Witchcraft and the Web: Weaving Pagan Traditions Online* by the appropriately named M. Macha Nightmare and *Magickal Weddings: Pagan Handfasting Traditions for Your Sacred Union*, by the somewhat-less felicitiously named Joy Ferguson.

"Our big market is the States," says ECW publicist Julie Girard. "There are so many pagan gatherings where we can promote our books. There are 2,500 people alone who attend the Heartland Pagan festival in Kansas City every spring. That is pretty astonishing." Astonishing is hardly the word for it. It's like some kind of witchcraft. ♦

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Olympic Committee to Revolutionize Games

"Distractions" to be Cleared Away

SALT LAKE CITY — Responding to criticism that the Olympic movement has lost its way, the International Olympic Committee announced today that future games will be pared down to their essentials. "This is a back to basics movement," said outgoing IOC president Jean-Marie Samaranch Habermas Olathabal. From now on, almost all athletic competitions will be eliminated so that the television networks can devote their full attention to compelling human interest stories.

"We dream of a games in which every single competitor is a brain tumor survivor, or cancer at the very least," said one IOC official. "By doing away with events such as skiing, skating and luging, we no longer have to hold the pageants at cold places full of Mormons, which is an added bonus."

The Oprahlympics still will have some events, on the grounds that without competitions there'd be no results left to rig. New events will include "Most Inspiring Tale Following the Death of a Close Relative," "Most Alluring Display of Innocent Enthusiasm Suitable for Marketing Tie-In Campaigns," "Brushes with Amputation," "Downhill Weeping," "Most Bogus Job at Home Depot" and "Ability to Tear Up On Camera (short program and freestyle)."

Incoming IOC chairman Tina Brown said she does want to preserve some of the old events, "But only the ones that are not really sports, like the skateboard thing on snow in the tunnel, and sledding in tight costumes."

Efforts by Norway to challenge the changes are expected to fail. "It's not our fault we don't have emotions," said Dirg Aaaardvarsvolenimun, reflecting on the Norwegian team's dim chances in this new format. "There's not even an event in Sullen Withdrawal."

The new opening ceremonies will begin with the Parade of the Chemo Patients, with thousands of sick people from around the world rolled into a massive stadium on the roofs of Chevy Suburbans, thus demonstrating their quiet ride and surprisingly good gas mileage. Then, after a concert from a recovering heroin addict and the Visa Card Moment of Silence for the Victims of Low Self-Esteem, the Oprahlympic torch will be brought in by a Formerly Famous Person Who is Now Extremely Sick. This will be followed by the quadrennial "Wheeling Jim McKay Out of Obscurity" ceremony to the accompaniment of overarticulate commentary from Bob Costas.

Following the ritual walkout by the Russian team, Barbara Walters will emerge to present an

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Bureaucracy and School Leadership

Chester E. Finn Jr. is a distinguished visiting fellow, Hoover Institution; member, Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education; and president, Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.

Nothing matters more to an organization's success than the quality of its leadership, and nowhere is that clearer than in public education. Twenty years of research have shown that effective schools nearly always have strong principals and that successful school systems nearly always employ effective superintendents. Yet **there are not nearly enough qualified people to lead some 91,000 public schools and nearly 15,000 school systems.**

What challenges do they—and we—face in trying to get more strong leaders for U.S. schools? The policy research organization Public Agenda recently set about to answer that question. It surveyed 1,800 principals and superintendents. The results are fascinating, sobering, and fraught with policy implications. Key findings include the following:

1. "Superintendents and principals . . . voice confidence that they can improve public education, but say their effectiveness is hampered by politics and bureaucracy." Four-fifths of superintendents and half the principals cite that as the main reason talented people vacate those roles. Among their foremost gripes: excessive litigation, "teacher union fanatics," and school board meddling.

2. "What superintendents and principals need most, they say, is more freedom to do their jobs as they see fit—especially the freedom to reward and fire teachers." Fewer than one-third say they have the autonomy and authority either to "reward outstanding teachers and staff" or to "remove ineffective teachers from the classroom." (By contrast, four-fifths say they have the freedom to deal with student discipline.)

3. "School leaders are far less worried about standards and accountability than about politics and bureaucracy." Although principals and superintendents have multifarious complaints about standardized testing as used in their districts—and superintendents are far more bullish about test-based accountability arrangements than are principals—they're much more bothered by the shackles on their wrists.

4. They are concerned about money. Yet almost three-quarters say they can manage with the budgets that they have. Most vexing on the resource front are external mandates that limit their ability to spend those budgets as they think best. The worst offender is special education for disabled youngsters. "According to 84 percent of superintendents and 65 percent of principals . . . special education issues exact an inordinate amount of district money and other resources."

5. Administrators believe that today's university-based training programs for "school leaders" are not adequate. Sixty-nine percent of principals and 80 percent of superintendents say such programs are "out of touch with the realities of what it takes to run today's schools." One principal commented, **"If you want more qualified superintendents, change the focus of prep programs from making researchers to creating practitioners."**

Public Agenda president Deborah Wadsworth concludes this report on an upbeat note, observing that the most remarkable quality of today's public school administrators is their "optimism and confidence." Still, one can hardly read this pathbreaking survey without recognizing that finding executives able to lead U.S. schools out of their present quagmire would be a whole lot easier if we'd agree to cut the red tape and really put them in charge. Charter schools, anyone?

— Chester E. Finn Jr.

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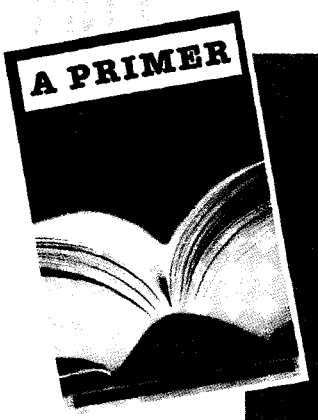

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Visit us on-line at* www.hoover.org *or contact us to receive a complimentary copy of* A Primer on America's Schools*—11 chapters by Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education.

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